

Spring 1998

# Silent partners: The economic life of women on the frontier of colonial New York

Aileen Button Agnew  
*University of New Hampshire, Durham*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation>

---

## Recommended Citation

Agnew, Aileen Button, "Silent partners: The economic life of women on the frontier of colonial New York" (1998). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 2004.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2004>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600



SILENT PARTNERS:  
THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF WOMEN ON THE FRONTIER  
OF COLONIAL NEW YORK

BY

AILEEN BUTTON AGNEW  
A.B., Vassar College, 1976  
M.S., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1980

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

May, 1998



**UMI Number: 9831936**

**Copyright 1998 by  
Agnew, Aileen Button**

**All rights reserved.**

---

**UMI Microform 9831936  
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

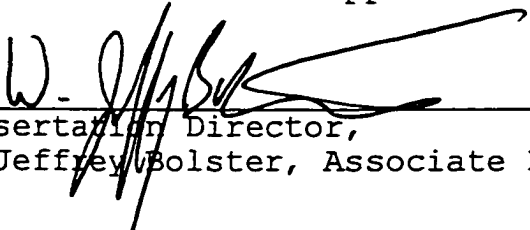
**UMI**  
**300 North Zeeb Road**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED


c 1998


Aileen Button Agnew

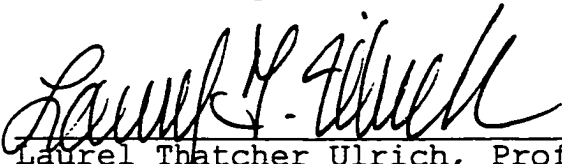
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dissertation Director,  
W. Jeffrey Bolster, Associate Professor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles E. Clark, Professor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J. William Harris, Associate Professor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Janet Polasky, Professor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Professor  
Harvard University

4-14-98  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could never have finished this dissertation without the help and support of a large number of people. On the academic and professional side, the first people I need to thank are my two mentors from the University of New Hampshire, Jeff Bolster and Laurel Ulrich. Their encouragement and insights helped me immeasurably, as did their rigorous attention to the quality of the work. I could not have had better role models. The contributions of the other members of my committee, Janet Polasky, Charlie Clark, and especially Bill Harris, enriched the content of this dissertation, and certainly improved the writing.

Many people read portions of this as the dissertation progressed, giving me valuable comments, most of which I think I successfully incorporated. Chief among these readers were James Merrell, Frank McCann, Cinthia Gannett, and the members of the UNH dissertation seminar, especially Candace Kanes, Edith Murphy, Beth Nichols, and Neill Depaoli.

This would have been a very different project if not for the help of Stefan Bielinski of the Colonial Albany Social History Project. He opened his research to me, gave

me encouragement and advice and generally introduced me to people of Colonial Albany, for which I will always be grateful. The staff of the New York State Library Manuscript Reading Room, and those at the New York Historical Society, Albany Institute of History and Art, the National Archives of Canada, and the Schenectady Historical Society all showed me great courtesy and helped me considerably.

This project received financial support from the University of New Hampshire in the form of a Dissertation Fellowship and a Summer Fellowship for Teaching Assistants. The History Department of UNH gave me assistance from the Gunst-Wilcox Fund. My research in Canada was sponsored by the Canadian Government as a Graduate Studies Fellowship, for which I thank them.

Finally, I need to thank my family- my husband, Tim, and our children, Peter, Ben, and Ellen, for their interest, tolerance, and love. I'm sure they thought this would never be finished. I want especially to thank my sister, Debbie for setting up my data base, and my brother, Chip, for putting up with me on my many expeditions to Albany. I wish my father could have lived to see me complete this work. He, my mother, and my sisters and brother, along with my husband and children, have consistently given me emotional support, which I will always remember and appreciate.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. ELIZABETH SANDERS AND THE LIMITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP.....	33
2. AFRICAN AMERICAN CONSUMERS IN THE SEGREGATED ECONOMY OF ALBANY.....	80
3. 'BY CASH AND WORK': THE GIVE AND TAKE OF MAKING PAYMENT IN FRONTIER NEW YORK.....	123
4. COMMERCIAL ENCOUNTERS: NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN AND TRADE.....	169
5. WOMEN AND CONSUMPTION ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION.....	223
6. LIFE DURING WARTIME: THOSE WHO STAYED AND THOSE WHO LEFT.....	270
Conclusion.....	306
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	315

## LIST OF TABLES

NUMBER	PAGE
1. WOMEN INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS	53
2. CUSTOMERS OF ELIZABETH SANDERS	54
3. PURCHASES OF SELECTED ITEMS IN E. SANDERS' ACCOUNTS	106
4. FABRIC TYPES PURCHASED BY E. SANDERS' CUSTOMERS	111
5. WOMEN INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS FROM SEVEN BOOKS	137
6. CREDITS OF INDIAN CUSTOMERS	188
7. YARDAGE NEEDED FOR CLOTHING AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS	238
8. COMPARATIVE PURCHASES OF TWO WIDOWS, SCHENECTADY, 1763	252
9. PURCHASES BY WOMEN FROM VARIOUS MERCHANTS	264

## LIST OF FIGURES

NUMBER	PAGE
1. MAP OF NEW YORK	32



## ABSTRACT

### SILENT PARTNERS: THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF WOMEN ON THE FRONTIER OF COLONIAL NEW YORK

by

Aileen Button Agnew  
University of New Hampshire, May, 1998

The Hudson-Mohawk frontier of eighteenth-century New York made both a boundary and a meeting place for several cultures. The shops and retail spaces of this borderland provided a common space for the convergence of women and their work with the more visible male-dominated economy. As recorded in local account books, black, white, and Indian women took part in many aspects of local commerce. As retailers, as producers, and as consumers, women participated in the world of business and accounts.

Settled in the seventeenth-century by the Dutch, this part of New York had long been occupied by Iroquoian tribes. Trade between these groups was the backbone of the frontier economy and remained so well into the eighteenth century, even after the influx of Anglo-Americans had begun to dilute the local Dutch culture. Among the black and white people who lived in Albany, Schenectady, and the Mohawk Valley between 1740 and 1780, Indians remained a familiar, though always potentially dangerous, presence. Despite tensions between the various cultures, the commercial economy of

borderland New York included the work of both men and women of white, black, and Indian peoples. The character of this work conformed to the specific conditions of the economy, drawing from a commerce based on an evolving trade with the backcountry. Family conditions and life-cycle interacted with changing mercantile conditions to determine the work experiences of individual women.

The world outside the retail stores was not a placid one. Instead, wars, demographic upheaval, and economic change rocked local society. Women living through these conditions needed to regularly make corrections in their work and their social habits, in order to maintain any sort of economic equilibrium. As the term "silent partners" implies, women played an important and largely overlooked role in the functioning of the New York economy. The elasticity of roles required to deal with changes of the moment drew from the traditions of women's work. This was true not only for the women of Dutch and English backgrounds, but for those of African-American and Native-American heritage as well. The women of frontier New York coped with the difficulties of war and a transfigured commerce, by applying customary work to address new economic concerns.

## INTRODUCTION

When describing his trip to Albany in 1749, Peter Kalm noted that the "women are perfectly well acquainted with economy; they rise early, go to sleep very late, and are almost superstitiously clean in regard to the floor, which is frequently scoured several times a week." Well-aware that the women's work that he described was specific to the time and place that he visited, the Swedish Kalm catalogued the activities of women in much the same way that he catalogued unusual flora and fauna. Kalm knew that women's work could vary from one region or country to another, and he found these variations worthy of note.

In referring to economy, Kalm specifically mentioned housework and confined his comments about women to their household chores, such as cooking and cleaning. Women's work, however, extended beyond the household, intersecting with the male-dominated commercial economy of the region. This dissertation explores the dimensions of that intersection in a time of profound economic and political upheaval, the years spanning 1740 to 1780, in a place characterized by overlapping cultures and rapidly changing demographics: the Hudson-Mohawk area of colonial New York.

The study of any colonial region unearths the active role that women played in the local and regional economies that they lived in. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's work in New England, Joan Jensen's study of Pennsylvania, and Johanna Miller Lewis's research into early North Carolina, all reveal women operating within a larger economy that connected ultimately to the Atlantic world. Variations in regional economies acting in concert with life-cycle forces shaped the individual work experiences of women.<sup>1</sup>

The title of this study, "Silent Partners: The Economic Life of Women on the Frontier of Colonial New York," is intended to depict the role that women played in the local economy of the Hudson-Mohawk region of the province of New York in the mid-eighteenth century. In modern usage, a silent partner is one who contributes capital or equipment but has no say in the day-to-day running of the business. Because the contribution of women to the functioning of the economy took place within boundaries set by social and

---

<sup>1</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) and "Martha Ballard and her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine" in Work and Labor in Early America, Stephen Innes, ed., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) pp 70-105; Joan Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Johanna Miller Lewis, "Women Artisans in Backcountry North Carolina, 1753-1790," North Carolina Historical Review 68 (1991):214-236.

cultural forces, they, too, were in some ways "silent partners." The recognition of those boundaries demands the acceptance of both sides of the line- in this case, acknowledgement of the richness of women's economic lives despite the very real restrictions of male-dominated commerce. The boundaries were not absolute, but flexible, expanding and contracting as circumstances required. Women's opportunities in the marketplace thus widened and shrank as circumstances dictated.

Historians of colonial women have approached women's autonomy from both sides of the boundary. One school of interpretation defines women principally in terms of their limitations, what they could not do. Another line of interpretation, while recognizing the constraints on women, focusses on the richness of women's experiences by looking at what they did in their lives, rather than what they did not do. This dissertation attempts to follow the second path, walking the boundary between the meaning of women's diverse commercial experiences and the restraints placed on women by eighteenth-century patriarchal society.-

---

- For examples of the first, see Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), Marylynn Salmon, Women and the Law of Property in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) and Deborah A. Rosen, Courts and Commerce: Gender, Law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1997). For the second, see Laurel

Participation and control, for instance, are not the same thing. Women participated in commerce and yet, as a group, women exercised little economic power. Even when women were economically autonomous, when, that is, they supported themselves in whole or in part, they did so with far fewer opportunities than men had. Women could sew, for example, but they could not travel. Some of the women in New York with the most autonomy lived the most economically difficult lives. When Albert Van Slyke went to trade at the fairs, his wife was left alone with their four children to deal with their creditors and face the consequences of losing her home. She had the freedom, within limits, to do as she judged best, but not the power to achieve wealth. Widows, on the other hand, had autonomy and perhaps the resources to support themselves well. Widow Neeltie Van Vechten, for instance, of Albany ran an active business as a merchant.

Early American business records show the active presence of women of various ethnic backgrounds and status. As historian Suzanne Lebsock points out, women have been left out of historical discussions not because they were not present but because they have been overlooked. The account

---

Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

books used in this study contain the records of women participating in many levels of the region's commerce.<sup>3</sup>

Eighteenth-century women have been portrayed as isolated from economic matters, with very little understanding of the masculine world of commerce and debt.<sup>4</sup> Yet the women in frontier New York appear in records that deal specifically with matters of economics, that is, the account books of local merchants. What is more, these account books clearly show that women in this area used their knowledge to help them survive. Historian Cornelia Dayton has shown that between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries women in Connecticut shed some

---

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984), xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," American Historical Review 89(1984):593-619; Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," WMO 3rd Ser. 33(1976):386-409; Daniel B. Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina," WMO 3rd. Ser. 48(1991): 387-408. Thorp's conclusion that women had no place in the public commercial life of Rowan County, should be taken a grain of salt. Having seen the tremendous diversity of account books kept in upstate New York, I would caution anyone from generalizing about a community from the evidence of one account book. Using several does not guarantee a complete picture but certainly adds more dimension to the story. Many women, although shut out of the profit-making parts of the economy, nevertheless were deeply engaged with commercial world. Poor women had no choice. More well-to-do women could afford to distance themselves but the poorer people were connected because they needed to be.

expertise in commercial matters. They nevertheless remained connected to the local economy and generally knowledgeable about economic matters, if not specifically knowledgeable about details of credit and mercantile activity.<sup>5</sup> The engagement of women with the local economy generally did not give them power, but it sometimes provided the means to get by.

The presence of women in the New York frontier economy, long accepted by novelists such as Walter D. Edmonds, remains largely unexplored by historians. The word "frontier" as used here conforms to the way that June Namias and other historians have used it, meaning a place where cultures with different and often competing interests exist in close proximity. In upper New York, encounters between Iroquois Indian tribes, the New York Dutch, the French, New Englanders, the British, and slaves from Africa and the West Indies shaped the countenance of this multi-cultural frontier. Many of these people did not even speak the same language, while others, such as the merchant Robert Sanders, carried on written correspondence in three languages and perhaps spoke more. For much of the forty years before this study begins, a veneer of peace overlay the meetings between

---

<sup>5</sup> Cornelia Hughes Dayton, Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 97-98, 102.



individuals, shattering near mid-century with the first in a series of wars.<sup>7</sup>

Snippets of information from the account books of eighteenth century Albany, Schenectady, and the Mohawk Valley reveal some of the many forms through which particular women engaged in the economy. Eva Becker bought a black bombazine dress, for a new job "serving at Hendrick's house," but her brother had to pay for it. Sussan, a slave in Albany, paid for a pair of stockings with potatoes. Anna Myndertse bought two dozen Dutch schoolbooks in 1753, returning seven of them four years later to help cover her debts to Schenectady merchant John Sanders. Neeltie Van Vechten contracted with shipper Martin Van Bergen to bring goods from New York for her retail business in Albany. Each of these women found a way to use her particular skills to obtain the goods she wanted. These women do not represent one uniform group; there was no "everywoman" in frontier New York.<sup>8</sup>

Broad cultural rules drew the general outlines of

---

<sup>7</sup> Walter D. Edmonds, Drums Along the Mohawk (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1936); June Namias, White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 12.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Tyms Day Book, Schenectady, 1762-1768 (Blot Book), Campbell Family Papers, NYSL; Mrs. Robert Sanders Account Book, 1753-1764, N-YHS; John Sanders Ledger, Schenectady, 1749-1783, N-YHS; Martin Van Bergen, Memorandum Book for his Sloop, 1763-1776, Van Bergen Family Papers, NYSL.

women's lives. Race and ethnicity played important roles. It mattered whether one was from a New York Dutch family, or an African-American, or a Mohawk Indian. Within the shape roughed out by these general cultural influences, life circumstances such as age, class, and marriage, etched the specific details of the daily working life of a specific woman.

The existing systems of exchange relied, as did most colonial exchange systems, on the extension of various kinds of credit or delayed payments.<sup>7</sup> Merchants usually recorded transactions in the name of the account holder, yet also named the person who actually came for the goods, writing "pr your wife" or "pr your son, Johannes" or whatever was appropriate. When payments occurred between merchants and customers, they often consisted of payment-in-kind, such as work or farm produce. Robert Sanders of Albany, for instance, received large quantities of wheat from farmers in exchange for retail merchandise from 1749 to 1753.

Eighteenth-century women used their own productive skills in their economic dealings with the local commercial establishment. Women understood cash and the exchange value

---

<sup>7</sup> Wilbur C. Plummer, "Consumer Credit in Colonial Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 46(1942):385-409; Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," JAH 18(1994):51-80.

of their work. Transactions between women and local merchants extended beyond the purchase and sale of consumer goods, into the realm of contracted work, as the evidence of outwork sewing in the accounts of Daniel Campbell and an unidentified Albany merchant illustrates.'

This study supplements earlier studies of women's history in two ways. First, I am researching women from a time and place left unexamined by other historians. Historians of women have not studied the complex frontier of what became upstate New York. The cultural diversity of the area leads to interpretive challenges, not faced by students of New England history, for example. Secondly, the account books that I use shed light on an area of women's lives that remains poorly understood, that is, their connections to the larger economy.

New York's history is not the history of New England nor even its neighbor Pennsylvania. Certainly the various colonies shared a common stage, but the multi-cultural character of New York shaped the plot, and even the set decorations, to stretch the metaphor further. Albany, New York, located on the west side of the Hudson River, sits at the heart of this study. First settled in the mid-

---

' Daniel Campbell Account Book (unbound), Schenectady, New York, Detroit, 1761-1765, Campbell Papers, NYSL; Unidentified Account Book of a Retail Merchant, Albany, 1760-1765, NYSL.

seventeenth century by Dutch traders, Albany began its existence as an outpost for the Dutch fur trade with the various Iroquois tribes. The commercial and cultural identity established in those early years stayed with the town after its takeover by the English and throughout its colonial history. Dutch continued to be spoken in parts of what had been New Netherland until into the nineteenth century, albeit a Dutch considerably changed from the original.<sup>10</sup>

The women of New Netherlands participated in this commerce as well. Early court records testify to the economic involvement of Dutch women, such as Baefse Pieters who brought suit for herself against men who owed her money, or Volkertie Jurriaens, wife of a baker who contracted on her own for the purchase of wheat and signed her own promissory note. Historian Donna Merwick notes that in the

---

<sup>10</sup> For one perspective on the early founding of Albany and the transition to English rule, see Donna Merwick, Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: The Dutch and English Experience (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For a history of the founding of Schenectady that emphasizes the commercial attitudes of its Dutch inhabitants see Thomas E. Burke, Jr., Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661-1710. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); For a discussion of the continuing presence of Dutch culture in New York, see Elisabeth Paling Funk, "Netherlands' Popular Culture in the Knickerbocker Works of Washington Irving," in New World Dutch Studies: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America 1609-1776, ed. by Roderic H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelley, (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1987), pp. 83-94.

commercial culture of Albany, women kept track of things "in their own small account books called tafelboeken," indicating a useful familiarity with the basics of accounting.<sup>11</sup>

During the first half of the eighteenth century, Albany remained a frontier outpost. Connected to the larger world of the British empire by the Hudson River, Albany stood as a bulwark against possible encroachment by the French and the various Indian tribes. Commercial connections to both Native Americans and the French, however, tempered the threats and perhaps prevented outright attacks on Albany itself. Indian women played an active role in this trade, both as couriers for traders, and as traders themselves.

New Yorkers lived largely in peace with their northern and western neighbors between the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 and the outbreak of war in 1744.<sup>12</sup> The years between 1750

---

<sup>11</sup> See for example Martha Dickinson Shattuck, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwijck, New Netherland, 1652-1664," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1993)ch. 3; for a brief discussion of women and commerce in Holland, see Simon Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 404-407 and A.T. van Deursen, Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion, and Society in Seventeenth Century Holland, trans. by Martin Ultee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch.4; Merwick, Possessing Albany, 103. Unfortunately, no tafelboek has been identified, to my knowledge.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the connections between the fur trade and the politics of the eighteenth century, see Thomas Norton, The Fur Trade of Colonial New York, 1686-1776 (Madison, WI:

and 1780 in frontier New York witnessed repeated dramatic political, social, and demographic change.<sup>13</sup> War flared up, overrunning the landscape with soldiers and warriors, many of them coming from outside of New York. Women felt the effects of the times. The dangers of war and bankruptcy existed for women as well as men. Women could be abandoned or left destitute in any number of circumstances, in which case they had only their accumulated knowledge and skills to trade on.

By the third-quarter of the eighteenth century, Albany's position as the hub of the Indian trade had deteriorated. In the late 1760s, John Lees took a tour of New York commenting in his journal on the settlements he encountered. When he reached Albany, he wrote, "Arrived at Albany this is a pleasant situated place on the South side of Hudson's River with an agreeable country around it...In this place are severall Dutch people of considerable Estates

---

University of Wisconsin Press, 1974). Norton attempts to correct a long standing view of the Albany Dutch as traitorous and selfish. For a discussion of the commercial specifics of Albany, see David Arthur Armour, The Merchants of Albany, New York, 1686-1760 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986). For a less generous account, see Francis X. Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), 73-75.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Kammen provides a useful overview of early New York history in Colonial New York: A History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).

before the Reduction of Canada many of them made a great deal of money in Contraband Traded with that Country...The houses are chiefly built after the Dutch taste. On the North End of Town is a small wooden Fort with 4 Blockhouses at present falling to Ruins." Albany's dependence on the Indian trade waned even as other towns to the west became more involved. Albany merchants relied increasingly on the proximity of British troops to buy their wares.<sup>14</sup>

The years of transition for the larger Albany economy also affected the economic roles of local women. The ups and downs of Albany commerce contributed to changes in the work that they could exchange for goods. Mrs. Mally Ouderkerck paid Elizabeth Sanders for goods in 1754 in wampum and sewing. As the Seven Years' War began, the market for wampum vanished, and by the late 1760s, most retailers preferred payment in cash.

After visiting Albany, Lees continued his journey to Schenectady. Here he noted an increase in business activity. Lees "set out from Albany for Schenectady being 17 miles, the road very fine but the Country not at all

---

<sup>14</sup> John Lees Journal, Quebec, 1768, NAC, 8; Not all Dutch New Yorkers concentrated on trade. For two different perspectives on the agricultural side of Dutch American life see Sung Bok Kim, Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York Manorial Society, 1664-1775 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) and David Steven Cohen, The Dutch-American Farm (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

settled...Schenectady is greatly increased in building since the last War, It's only support is the Indian Trade and its Chief Inhabitants excepted, a few who made money in the Last War are Bateauxmen." What Lees observed, however were the last days of Schenectady's trading. The early 1760s had witnessed the engagement of women in the production of clothing for shipment to the forts. By the late 1760s, this market for women's work no longer existed, or at least records of that work do not survive.<sup>15</sup>

The ascendancy of the Anglo-Irish transplant, William Johnson, as head of the Indian Department led, in part, to this repositioning of the Indian trade. His personality, connections to the Iroquois tribes, and rapidly accumulating wealth, dominated the country west of Albany. Schenectady, located on the Mohawk River and formerly shut out of the trade by Albany's politicians and merchants, became increasingly active as a central place for shipping goods west. The Mohawk Valley itself faced increasing settlement and conflict with the resident Indian groups, particularly after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 opened the door wide for the settlement by whites of central New York.

In the Mohawk Valley, women from various Iroquois tribes lived virtually side by side with white women

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



settlers and their families. In fact, living with William Johnson were Mary Brant, a Mohawk woman, and the daughters of Johnson's white wife. Johnson's settlement witnessed the regular coming and going of Indian women, both in groups and singly. Some of these women served Johnson's interests, and their own, acting as interpreters and trading in consumer goods. Mary Brant's engagement with the local commerce and her place as an Indian consumer suggest that individual Indian women chose the extent of their involvement with frontier trade.<sup>16</sup>

When John Lees arrived at Niagara, settlements were less notable in size but remained clearly connected to trade. "The Indian traders here," he wrote, "are chiefly poor ignorant Dutch people and none of them of any consequence." Lees drew attention to both settled and unsettled characteristics of New York.<sup>17</sup> The presence and importance of Dutch traders in towns and on the frontier illustrate the links between the trading centers of Albany and Schenectady and the expanding frontier. Sally Montour, an Indian woman who traded in New York and elsewhere, helped forge the chain

---

<sup>16</sup> Milton W. Hamilton, Sir William Johnson: Colonial American, 1715-1763 (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Lees Journal, 16. When I quote from early sources I quote exactly, spellings included.

of trade between Schenectady and the outposts.

The frontier, as a place where people from different cultures met and negotiated, had rippled west from Albany. Similarly, this dissertation focuses at first on Albany then opens westward and northward. After the Revolution, when this study ends, the edge of the New York frontier had moved so far away from Albany that functionally it lay in Detroit and Canada. The Iroquois tribes increasingly lost their place and what is now New York State served less and less as a connecting point to other cultures.

Life on a frontier carried special challenges and perhaps opportunities for women. Historians have long speculated that women fared better, in terms of status and economic independence, in areas of the colonies newly settled by whites than they did in more developed settings.<sup>17</sup> Certainly in areas with scant historical records, the few women among the few men stand out. The Hudson-Mohawk region of colonial New York was a cultural frontier but a well-settled one. In 1749, the resident white and black population of Albany County which included Albany, Schenectady, and many other towns, numbered about 10,600, of whom perhaps 2,700 were adult women. Women were

---

<sup>17</sup> See for instance, the pathbreaking work of Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," WMQ 3rd. Ser. 34 (1977):542-571.

not just present in significant numbers, but accounted for in the records of local merchants and traders.<sup>13</sup>

Account books from Albany, Schenectady, and the Mohawk Valley, numbering about thirty-five, contain the records of a wide variety of merchants, traders, and craftsmen from mid-eighteenth century New York. By today's standards, the books are oversized, many with leather bindings, although some few were unbound pages, stitched together. The majority of the records derive from businesses, rather than personal and household accounts. In this area of New York, most extant household accounts consist of loose receipts, collected with other family papers, rather than actual family account books. This stands in sharp contrast to the historic record of New England, where many farmers kept individual account books. The dimension of women's economic lives that surfaces from these New York accounts is not that of housebound work, but that of commercial relations with the larger economy.<sup>14</sup>

The account books provide systematically recorded evidence about gender relations on a common, even public

---

<sup>13</sup> These numbers are approximations based on tables in Robert V. Wells, The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 112, 116.

<sup>14</sup> This is not to suggest that New Englanders did not also keep scraps of paper, but to illustrate the commercial nature of New York records.

ground. Historians such as June Namias have studied symbolic depictions of gender, but the account books tell us about gender in a different way. The records suggest the dimensions of female autonomy in a male world. The accounts that list the 51 visits of Susanna Van Patten to Samuel Tyms' store in 1763 also provide compelling evidence of a change in her shopping habits when she remarried.<sup>22</sup> After her marriage, her visits to the store sharply decreased. In the Mohawk Valley, Mrs. Fonda, the wife of the trader Jelles Fonda, had the authority to argue with John Butler about the value of deerskins, but not the authority to win her argument. In Albany, Mrs. Cole had the independence to come alone with her completed projects to the merchant who supplied the fabric, but when she was accompanied by her husband, Mr. Cole claimed the credit for the work. These women all engaged in commercial activities, but within limits.

Other historians have used account books as sources to study early American society, sometimes using the books to illuminate our understanding of women's place in the economy. In studying Connecticut legal records, Bruce Mann and Cornelia Dayton explored the connection of the local Connecticut economy to the developing legal system of the

---

<sup>22</sup> Namias, White Captives, 17.

eighteenth century. Their descriptions of the legal ramifications of written and unwritten accounts shed important light on the workings of colonial society. Taken together, Mann and Dayton provide a relatively complete picture of men and women in the economy of eighteenth-century Connecticut.<sup>--</sup>

In studies of Massachusetts, Daniel Vickers and Winifred Rothenberg have used the account books of farmers and householders to study very different aspects of the Massachusetts colonial economy, but not to address any component of women's work. Rothenberg used the account books to establish a history of prices and farmers' connections to the market. Her history is a history of markets and values. Vickers, on the other hand charts the evolution of the working economy of the colony, that is how the actual work of Massachusetts men changed over time.<sup>-3</sup>

Account books have served as the basis for studies of production and consumption, especially in Backcountry or

---

-- Dayton, Women Before the Bar, ch.2; Bruce H. Mann, Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 12-43.

-3 Winifred Barr Rothenberg, From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Daniel Vickers, Farmers and Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

rural areas. Johanna Miller Lewis made extensive use of accounts in her discussion of rural North Carolina, asking how the local retail trade evolved as the backcountry developed, and to explore the activities of women in the development of the local weaving industry. Ann Smart Martin likewise examines the extent of the consumer revolution in the Virginia countryside by using account books. Martin uses the books to probe the relationship between consumers and the items that they purchased. Elizabeth Mancke looks at issues of gender and production using late eighteenth-century account books from Nova Scotia, suggesting that men and women bought goods for very different purposes. Women took home items that needed work to make them complete, while men bought completed products, or tools necessary to their work. Although each of these historians based her study on account books, all were forced to rely on the information from a very small collection, a handful of accounts, or even a single retailer's account, kept for a limited period. An exception is the detailed study of eighteenth-century women's wages and wage work by Gloria Main who used the information from more than 100 account books to provide a sweeping picture of women's work in the developing colonial economy. Main concluded that in the years leading up to the American Revolution, women assumed greater control over their economic lives as increasing

opportunities to earn money opened up.<sup>24</sup>

Many traders and merchants kept several versions of account books, with important implications for the study of women. Retailers kept track of daily transactions in a day book. These account books listed, in the order of occurrence, sales made or credits received, sometimes, but not always listing the monetary value of transactions. An entry in a day book commonly contained the date of the entry, the name of the person, whether debtor or creditor, the items bought or credited, and the monetary value of the debt or credit. Some retailers kept two versions of the day book, one that might be called a "blot book," kept on hand in the store. A "blot book" also might contain notes in the margin, and entries made in a variety of handwritings, reflecting the participation of more than one person selling in the store. A second copy of the day book might be kept as well, a neater, slightly edited version of the working

---

<sup>24</sup> Johanna Miller Lewis, Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Ann Smart Martin, "Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade from London to the Virginia Frontier," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1993); Elizabeth Mancke, "At the Counter of the General Store: Women and the Economy in Eighteenth-Century Horton, Nova Scotia," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995) pp. 167-181; Gloria Main, "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," WMO 3rd Ser. 51(1994):39-66.

blot book.<sup>-5</sup>

In the case of Samuel Tyms' books, the tidied up version of the blot book edited out the presence of women. In the first place, the recopied accounts hid that fact that in the original record, based on the distinctive, crabbed handwriting often seen in the signatures of New York Dutch women, his wife made numerous entries of exchanges. In the second place, a transaction between Tyms and Annatje Van Slyke showing the purchase of goods with "paid by sowing" written in the margin, did not appear in the clean copy at all. The incidence of these kinds of deletions may be minimal, or they may be frequent. When only one set of books exists for a merchant, historians have no way of knowing that they have seen women's complete involvement. Women's participation may be greater than suspected but it is not likely to be smaller.<sup>-7</sup>

Merchants who ran complex businesses kept separate books for separate parts of their businesses, and this also could mean the loss of information about women, Indians, or blacks. Robert Sanders of Albany noted the existence of a

---

<sup>-5</sup> The books show some variation in form and come from before the days of true double-entry accounting. The keepers of these accounts called them account books and so I do as well.

<sup>-7</sup> Unidentified Day Book (Samuel Tyms), Schenectady, 1761-1766, Campbell Family Papers and Tyms Day Book. Compare the entries for May 25, 1764.



"wampen book" to keep track of his business in wampum. John Sanders, his brother, of Schenectady kept an account book for his trade in ginseng sometimes collected by women, as well as those related to his consumer retailing business. Jelles Fonda of the Mohawk Valley kept a book on his trade in cattle among his other account books. Samuel Tyms of Schenectady left his blot book and his day book behind, but no trace remains of his "sewing book" where he recorded his outwork sewing business. The loss over the years of the "wampen book" and the "sewing book" surely have shaped our understanding of the local Hudson-Mohawk economy. However extensive the collections of papers left by these men are, they are by no means complete and no single account book provides a thorough picture of their business.

Other books record the accounts of individuals, usually noting on opposing pages, the debts and credits of one person, usually a man, much less often a woman. Many of these account books appear to be rather infrequently updated and contain a less than complete record of one person's purchases. In other words, the account books, or ledgers, that list records by name, may show the accumulated debt of a purchaser, but they may not show the full purchasing history of that person. In Elizabeth Sanders' account book, she sometimes made reference to sales "as per day book" or "as per old book" when the sales do not show up in the

extant records of her trading. This is especially frustrating when it happens in the accounts of slaves, about whom we know so little. Care should be taken when interpreting these accounts not to assume that one account book tells a complete story of the relationship between retailer and consumer.

New York merchants and traders also sometimes kept a variety of other books, or used their account books to serve more than one purpose. For instance, Daniel Campbell and Martin Gerritsen Van Bergen both kept memorandum books to keep track of goods ordered or goods to be delivered. Daniel Campbell used one of his memorandum books first to keep track of his purchases in New York City, and later as a day book to record sales in Detroit, including a number of exchanges with "Peggy washerwoman." John Sanders kept a separate book to keep track of bonds and notes. Different types of transactions thus required different types of record keeping, yielding different kinds of information about women in the economy. Evidence of women buying goods takes several different forms. Most commonly, an entry for a particular date will read for example, "John Bradt pr yr wife," followed by the goods purchased. These entries occur with enough frequency that it appears that every time a woman made a purchase, that fact was recorded. Unlike those in New England, New York merchants consistently noted who of

a household actually came and took the items with them. Other times, the name of the woman, such as "Mrs. Cuyler" or "Miss Christeana Truewase" appears. Many but not all of the women specifically called "Mrs." were widows. Other times, widows are called "Widow" or "Wedu." In Samuel Tyms' accounts, those entries made in the handwriting of his wife often contain the full name of the female purchaser, such as "Catrin White."

The account books in which women figure most largely are the accounts connected to the larger commercial or consumer economy. Those accounts that detail the interchanges of a local craftsman, or commodity producer, such as a brewer, contain many fewer references to women. Local industries, by and large, were dominated by local men and their records say little about local women. The accounts of Arendt Bradt, a brewer in Schenectady, listed the business of only a few widows, while the legal business of Abraham Yates of Albany likewise featured few interactions with women.<sup>47</sup>

In some ways, the account books resemble archaeological sites- the famous historical sites on the surface are not

---

<sup>47</sup> Arendt Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1737-1749 (in Dutch), W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL and Abraham Yates Account Book, Albany, NYSL; Yates was an important figure in Albany during the American Revolution but his historical fame did not mean that his accounts contained useful information for this study.

necessarily the most interesting below ground. For instance, the accounts of Samuel Tyms and Daniel Campbell are both important records of the period between 1759 and 1763 in Schenectady. Daniel Campbell has a firm historical reputation as an important Schenectady merchant, while Samuel Tyms retained no such reputation. Tyms lived in Schenectady for a number of years but left for Detroit after the death of his wife in the late 1760s. Brief references to Tyms appear in the letters of William Johnson, Phyn & Ellice, and other traders but his history is by no means well-known. His accounts however contain valuable evidence especially regarding the work and purchases of Schenectady women.-"

---

" Daniel Campbell Accounts, Schenectady, Campbell Papers, NYSL; A look at the few references to Samuel Tyms suggests a life that ended in despair and perhaps ruin. Tyms lived and traded in Schenectady in the early 1760s, working in close contact with his young wife, Jannetje. She died at the age of twenty-three in 1767. Soon thereafter, Tyms left Schenectady, spending time in New York City and later moving to Detroit. Phyn & Ellice hounded him politely for payment in cash during 1767 and 1768. In 1770, Isaac Todd of Michilimackinac complained to a fellow trader that some rum he had bought from Tyms was what was "generally sold to Indians" and added, "I cannot believe Mr. Tyms know of this." Two years later James Phyn wrote to his partner Alexander Ellice that Tyms had died, continuing "we have not the particulars of Tymses Death yet its certain he was suffocated in his Bed but whether Drunk or sober is yet in Doubt." These few notes on the life of Samuel Tyms, strung together here, certainly give an impression of a man who fell apart after the death of his wife, stooping perhaps to cheating his acquaintances and drinking to excess. And yet given that these are fragments, that may not be the case at all. See James Phyn to Alexander Ellice, Dec. 25, 1767, Feb.

This study is based on a large number of account books but a few especially complete or detailed books proved especially helpful. For four books, I constructed a database to record the large numbers of purchases. Perhaps the most significant of these is the account book of Mrs. Robert Sanders (Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders), a rare record of a married woman's retail trade, 1753-1764. Since I use this account book extensively in this dissertation, I entered every purchase for the duration of the accounts, a strategy especially helpful for looking in depth at the transactions of slaves. Also included in the database was the account book kept from 1749-1753 by her husband, Robert Sanders of Albany. The account book of an unidentified Albany Retail Merchant held important information about the years of the Seven Years' War in Albany, while for the same period in Schenectady, the account book of Samuel Tyms provided key information. For these last three books, I collected one years worth of purchases by women, as well as purchases by their husbands.-'

---

15, 1768, and Mar. 12, 1772, Phyn & Ellice Letterbook, 1767-1774, Microfilm, NAC; Isaac Todd to William Edgar, June 2, 1770, William Edgar Letters, 1750-1787, Photostats, NAC.

- Recognizing the value of the evidence contained in the account books also requires the recognition of the limits of the evidence. Purchases and credits can not speak directly of women's involvement in all of their work or nor describe all of their relationships. The consumers noted in the accounts can not always be identified absolutely, in part

The economy of Albany in 1750 where the dissertation begins is not the same as that of 1780, where it ends and the extent of women's involvement in that economy likewise did not remain the same. The trends of women's history in New York do not, however, proceed in lockstep with the events notable in political and military history. Certainly, events such as war affected women's lives and the account books tell this story. But if history is a narrative, women's history overlays the plot with verses of its own. The frontier of New York changed during these years, and so did women's lives, but those changes do not directly reflect the advance of time. Unlike a successful army, or political cause, the economic relationships of women follow no clear route of advancement.

I begin with the account books of Elizabeth and Robert Sanders, looking first at her place in the local economy, and what her retail business meant in the larger commercial scheme. Elizabeth Sanders' participation in the business of retailing, while the married mother of young children, provides the context for looking at questions about the

---

due to naming practices among the New York Dutch. The ability to generalize about women depends largely on the ability to identify individual women and place them in their social context. See for instance, Edward H. Tebenhoff, "Tacit Rules and Hidden Family Structures: Naming Practices and Godparentage in Schenectady, New York, 1680-1800," Journal of Social History 18(1985): 567-585.

extent of her autonomy and the autonomy of other female traders. Her account book likewise provides the main source for the second chapter, a study of Albany's black consumers during the 1750s. A number of Albany's slaves, many of them women, made purchases from Sanders over the course of ten years. These purchases shed light on the consumerism of slaves and how they used both work and purchasing to push the limits of their economic interests and expression.

From there, the study moves out from Albany, discussing the engagement of women in Albany and Schenectady in the commercial economy as producers and consumers. Credits earned by manufacturing clothing gave some women access to consumer goods. The relationship established with the merchants earned women money or goods, but independence did not necessarily result. Consumer habits also played a dual role in women's working lives. The goods that women bought for their entertainment contributed to reshaping their work, as for instance, fashion determined what women sewed for themselves. The circumstances of women's personal lives similarly shaped the terms of their consumerism.

Following this look at the expansion of the frontier, I then turn to the ways that women of Native-American descent fit into the trading economy of New York. The autonomy of Native-American women depended on different cultural parameters from those of white women. Indian women

possessed a mobility that white women so often lacked, traveling many miles, and not just the few miles to the next settlement. The presence of Indians in areas of white settlement, although expected, did not pass unnoticed by visitors. In 1755, a Frenchman from Canada told William Johnson, "There are French Indians everyday almost, trading at Albany." As late as 1768, Richard Smith could still remark matter-of-factly after arriving in Albany, "We saw some Indians here & found the Weather very warm and sultry." Indian women, too, had a presence in these frontier settlements, albeit quite different from that of the men.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, I trace the impact of the Revolution on women in the local economy, following the loyalists who fled to refuge in Canada and exploring the place of those who stayed. For those who left, especially those with few resources, the control of the British army dictated what they could do and in fact, what they had to do. For those who stayed, the war shattered the standing economy, effectively eliminating any remaining commercial role for women for the duration. Even though women's responsibilities increased with husbands and fathers at

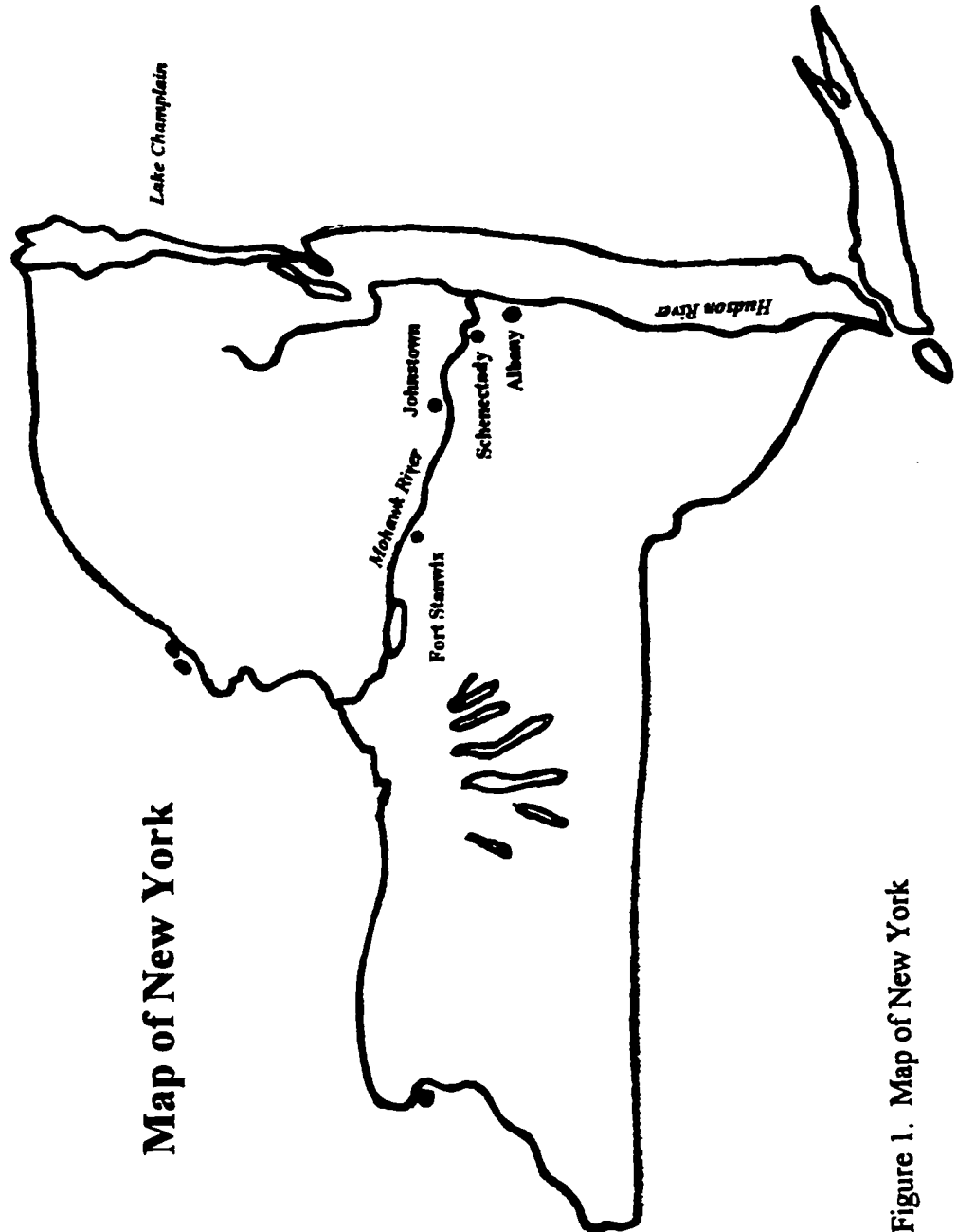
---

<sup>10</sup> James Sullivan et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965) [hereafter Johnson Papers], 1:508-509; Richard Smith, A Tour of the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware in 1769, ed. by Francis W. Halsey (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., 1989), 84.



war, this enlargement of women's roles did not carry over into the mercantile sphere, in large part because of the war's disruption of local trade. The severing of longstanding mercantile relationships and the generation of new business ties by men concentrating on the war, shut women out of local commerce.

The commercial world revealed by the account books had its foundations in the personal relationships of the merchants and customers as much as in the goods, services and cash that flowed through the local markets. The lives of the women captured in the entries felt the impact of external forces of markets and war, forces that could be either tempered or magnified by life-cycle or household circumstance. The account book of Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders opens our eyes to her relationships with her husband, her customers, and her family slaves, as well as to her place in local commerce.



Map of New York

Figure 1. Map of New York

## Chapter 1.

### Elizabeth Sanders and the Limits of Entrepreneurship

One October day in the autumn of 1754, five people made their way through the streets of Albany, engaged on similar, but separate errands to the old Dutch house of Robert Sanders, a wealthy merchant and sometime public servant. They went to see his wife, Elizabeth, herself a member of an elite family and the mother of young children, intending to purchase imported goods. These customers, men and women, black and white, bought fabric and rum, tea and thread, from the wife of a well-known merchant, and not from the merchant himself. This chapter situates Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders and her customers in the commercial world of Albany, exploring the dimensions of her retailing business and the limits of her economic independence.

Born in 1725, to the prominent Schuyler family of Albany, Elizabeth married the wealthy Robert Sanders in 1747, shortly after her twenty-third birthday. Her marriage was unusual for a number of reasons. First of all, her husband was nearly twenty years older than she was. Despite the fact that she was his second wife, this discrepancy was

unusual for Albany couples. When couples married and even when widowed partners remarried, they tended to marry people of approximately the same age as themselves. Secondly, she married a man with a lower social status than her own. Her family connections helped propel Robert Sanders to the mayorship of Albany within seven years of their marriage. Less unusual was her pregnancy at the time of her marriage. Her first child was born within seven months of her marriage. Over the next fourteen years, she bore eight children altogether, losing more than one in infancy. Throughout the period that she kept her retail accounts she had young children to look after. When she died at the age of thirty-eight in 1763, her youngest daughter was only two years old.

---

Stefan Bielinski, Director of the Colonial Albany Social History Project (CAP), generously allowed me access to the project files. The project is a model community history program sponsored by the New York State Education Department and is located at the State Museum in Albany. All project activities are described in a comprehensive guide to operations entitled, The People of Colonial Albany: A Community History Project (Albany, 1994 edition). The project's research base and its principal research resource are the biographies of the 16,000 individuals who lived in Albany before the Industrial Revolution. References to individual biographical case histories are defined by each subject's unique case number which is noted in parentheses. For example, see Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders (1274) and Robert Sanders (1443). The CAP also maintains case histories on a number of individuals who passed through Albany or lived there very briefly. These people have not been given case numbers but nevertheless sometimes have important connections to my project's research. Such cases are referenced as CAP cases with no case numbers. For more

Robert Sanders (1705-1765), merchant and politician, carried on an active trade with Canada and England. Collecting furs from Indian traders and wheat from local farmers, he parlayed his business into a large fortune and considerable political influence. The daybook from his retailing business and his letterbooks show a far flung web of contacts controlled by Sanders from its hub in Albany. His customers and correspondents primarily consisted of white men of property, although his Native-American clientele also played an important role in his business. The accounts noted in his daybook form an interesting comparison to his wife's account.<sup>-</sup>

In 1753, Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders of Albany, New York began keeping track of her retail accounts in a new account book. She labeled her book on the front page in both Dutch and English, "Het Boeckjea B, The Book 'B'," further embellishing the page with a number of other "B"s. After her death, her husband added the phrase "van myn vrouw" (of my wife) to the book's title, an explicit acknowledgment

---

on the significance of the marriage between Elizabeth Schuyler and Robert Sanders, see Stefan Bielski, "Scottish-Dutch Intermarriage in Colonial New York: Albany Merchants and the Brides of New Netherlands," unpublished paper, on file at CAP.

- Robert Sanders Account Book, 1749-1753, Robert Sanders Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collection, NYSL; Letterbook of Robert Sanders, 1758-1765, Historic Cherry Hill Collection, NYSL.

that the accounts had belonged to her.<sup>3</sup> Surviving among her husband's papers, the accounts provide a rare window to eighteenth-century Albany, recording as they do the details of a married woman's business with a socially disparate group of customers. This chapter argues that Elizabeth Sanders' retailing operation functioned distinct from her husband's, but not completely disconnected. Her business concerns paralleled his, even complemented them, but they were her own. He, however, also maintained his interest in her activities. Customary Dutch practices encouraged women to devote themselves to trade and other commercial activities for the benefit of their children. These activities also served the interests of the spouse, increasing the assets of the couple and their children at the same time. Elizabeth Sanders and Robert Sanders both descended from this heritage.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The Account Book of Mrs. Robert Sanders, Albany, 1753-1764, Sanders Family Papers, N-YHS (hereafter ESS Accounts). I don't know why Sanders spelled "Boeckje" as "Boeckjea," but her writing is quite clear.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Cleary discusses the business of Mary Alexander, a very successful merchant in New York City during this general period. However, she does not mention any account books of Alexander, "'She-Merchants' of Colonial America: Women and Commerce on the Eve of the Revolution," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1989), ch. 5; see also Martha Dickinson Shattuck, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwijck, New Netherland, 1652-1664," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1993), ch. 3; The father of Elizabeth Sanders, Peter Schuyler, was trader and acted as the Commissary of Fort Oswego for a number of years

Mrs. Sanders' account book clearly records a retail business and not household accounts. She employed a typical system of listing a customer's account on opposing pages, with debits recorded on the left and credits on the right. This retail trade of Elizabeth Sanders does, however, present some interpretive difficulties for the historian of colonial women. Categories of behavior generated for other time periods and places do not comfortably fit around Elizabeth Sanders. Unlike many other women traders, Sanders never became a widow and yet carried on with a business.

Some colonial married women acted on their own. Historian Mary Beth Norton coined the term "fictive widow" for married women of the seventeenth century "whose husbands, for one reason or another, were unwilling or unable to govern them," sometimes serving their own interests despite the opposition of their husbands. Elizabeth Sanders did not act on her own, indeed Robert Sanders was complicitous in her trading, and appreciative of her companionship. In 1763, he mourned in a letter to a friend of his "Great Grief and Sorrow" at the death of his "Dear & Valuable wife which Great Loss is most hetherto Insupportable to me I pray God to take it some what from me." Elizabeth Sanders did not conduct her trade in

---

when Sanders was young. She was thus exposed to trading from an early age.

disregard of her husband's authority but with his tacit, if not open support.<sup>5</sup>

The role that Elizabeth Sanders played in her retailing parallels in many ways that of a "deputy husband," as first defined by historian Laurel Ulrich. The Dutch, however, customarily expected every "goede vrouw" to fill the role of deputy husband. In a traditional Dutch marriage, the wife and the husband together served the interests of their marriage and their children, in a partnership less strongly founded in patriarchy. This shared responsibility, reflected in Dutch laws of inheritance that gave the wife an equal interest in the property generated by the marriage, faced increasing stress under colonial English law. Yet fragments of the older system remained, as seen in the trading of Elizabeth Sanders.<sup>6</sup>

Other traders of Dutch heritage relied on the participation of their wives as well. Jelles Fonda, a

---

<sup>5</sup> Mary Beth Norton, Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 140; Robert Sanders to John Mico Wendell, Albany, Aug. 15, 1763, Robert Sanders Letterbook.

<sup>6</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 36-50; For a discussion of Dutch marriages and families, see Sherrin Marshall, The Dutch Gentry, 1500-1650: Family, Faith, and Fortune (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); David E. Narrett, Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 51-56, 82-84.



trader in the Mohawk Valley regularly sent his wife to Schenectady and elsewhere, to do business in his name. In Schenectady, John Butler's wife, Catalintje Bradt Butler, frequently appears in his records, conducting his business. In 1759, for instance Butler recorded the following debit to the account of Arendt Bradt, "To cash lent you by my wife, " and regularly listed her as having delivered cash to men. In 1765, he wrote under the account of Jelles Fonda that he had settled an account, "To cash in full pd Mrs Fonda of all a Counts to this Day." The communities of Albany, Schenectady, and surrounding areas included women who not only understood the basic concepts of commerce but used these concepts regularly in their dealings with men and with each other.

Unlike other couples engaged in trading in the Albany area, Elizabeth Sanders' does not seem to have assisted her husband in other aspects of his retail business. In Robert Sanders' account books and ledgers, we never see his wife stepping in for him. Her handwriting never shows up in his books although in the day book of Samuel Tyms, we clearly see the crabbed handwriting of Mrs. Tyms. Our perception that Elizabeth Sanders' took no part in her husband's

---

<sup>1</sup> John Butler Account Book, 1759-1774, W.T. Hanson Collection, Box 3, NYSL. During the Revolution, John Butler fought with the Loyalists. His wife and family were held hostage in Albany for a time.

retailing may, however, be a result of the selective way that documents survive through the years. We do not know for instance, if Robert Sanders kept a "blot book" which did not survive, but which might have shown entries written in Elizabeth Sanders' hand.<sup>†</sup>

Being a good wife in New England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries could take any number of forms and some New England women did create a niche for themselves in the local economy, such as Mistress Hewlett who raised poultry and surprised her neighbors by lending money to her own husband. In New York, the surprise might have been considerably less. Here, people with a heritage of mixed cultures might perhaps have expected a woman's involvement with her own business.<sup>‡</sup>

Retail trading never could take priority over the other aspects of Elizabeth Sanders' life, but it did take place side by side with other occurrences. In October of 1756, a smallpox epidemic swept Albany and the Sanders household, leaving Robert Sanders bereft of his "promising son Barent", "who Departed this life unexpectedly and in the twinkling of an eye," much to his sorrow. The other young children of Robert and Elizabeth Sanders were spared as he wrote to

---

<sup>†</sup> Samuel Tyms Day Book, Schenectady, 1762-1768 (Blot Book), Campbell Papers, NYSL.

<sup>‡</sup> Ulrich, Good Wives, 46.

business associates in the beginning of November. These weeks saw four entries in Elizabeth Sanders' account, three of them sales to slaves. On October 27, in the midst of a serious family health crisis, Sanders sold the makings of a suit to one local slave and tea to another. Just over a week later, with the illness largely subsided, she sold "a green Rugg" and rum to another customer. Even under the stress of smallpox, she made sales, inscribing an account of the exchange. Just so in the midst of his grief did Robert bring up the subject of his business in his letter about the epidemic, commenting that his other children would be kept "confined to the Room untill fryday next when please God I hope to have the Room Cleaned with some Venigar to prevent it spreading. I noted you had Rec'd £ 70 Cash w[hi]ch I rec'd p[er] my Brother also my red Trunk..." This juxtaposition of commercial and personal affairs mirrored daily life in the Sanders household.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to many women shopkeepers, Elizabeth Sanders did not take up trading to support herself. Albany's most difficult economic period still lay in the future when her trading peaked in the mid-1750s. The engrossment of the Sanders' household with the particulars

---

<sup>12</sup> ESS Accounts, Mrs. Gertruy Wendell, Lane, Tom, Cate Accounts; Letter to Richard and Robert Ray, November 2, 1756, Robert Sanders Letterbook, .

of trading fostered her own endeavors in commerce.

The records that Elizabeth Sanders kept were not different in form than those of other retail traders in either Albany or Schenectady. Many merchants kept more than one set of books, day books cross-referenced to account books. However, it may have been common for traders with a smaller clientele to keep only one actual account book. Elizabeth Sanders' Book A seems to have predated the Book B. Many of the accounts in Book B begin with the phrase, "Brought out of Book A f[oli]o X, Balice due to me." There may also have been other books. Mrs Jacob Harty's account includes a debit for February 15, 1754 that says "To an accot in an old Book for....£ 2.14.3 3/4." Another account mentions a purchase "as per day book." Book B thus gives us only a piece of Elizabeth's retailing history. Her business was strongest between 1753 and 1759 with relatively few entries for the years after 1759. Her customers included people with limited credit and means such as white women and slaves. The five people who came to buy on that October day in 1754 included one white man, Barnardus Hansen, one black woman, Bet, a slave of John Van Alstyn and three white women, Mrs. Nenne Brown, Mrs. Hilletie Merriday, and Mrs. Cornelia Dunbar.

As Cornelia Dunbar made her way to her destination, she walked along streets offering a panoramic view of the Hudson

River and the East Manor of Rennsselaerwyck to the east. Perched on the banks above the river, the town and the fort that dominated it afforded some excellent vistas of the river and its traffic with boats of various sizes and shapes arriving regularly from the south, bringing goods from England via New York. According to a mid-century visitor, the houses that lined the streets were "very neat and partly built of stones covered with shingles of white pine. Some are slated with tile from Holland...Most of the houses are built in the old Frankish way, with the gable end toward the street, except for a few which were recently built in the modern style." The Sanders house was one of the old Dutch houses in the heart of Albany. The face of the Albany that Elizabeth Sanders lived in was not an English face, having but recently begun to absorb the impact of new British architectural styles.::

The shop towards which Elizabeth Sanders' customers headed, likely occupied all or part of a room in the family house, perhaps even the kitchen. Testimony from Lord Loudoun's list of Albany housing places Robert Sanders in a house with 6 rooms, 4 of them with fireplaces. The Sanders house did not earn the accolade "Good house," as other

---

:: Peter Kalm, Peter Kalm's Travels in North America, The English Version of 1770, Adolph Benson, trans. and ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 342, 341.

houses nearby did, but the officer drawing up the list did note space for 2 officers (in a pinch) and as many as 8 men (also in a pinch). According to the soldier-interviewer, the family occupied only 2 rooms out of 6 available. Nothing in Elizabeth Sanders' account book gives a clear picture of what her retailing operation looked like, or where she kept the goods she sold. There is nothing to indicate that she actually had a store or shop, although one of the rooms in house could have functioned that way.<sup>22</sup>

Some merchants and traders in the Hudson-Mohawk area, however, maintained spaces that they identified as stores, such as John Sanders of Schenectady, Robert's brother, who noted that a customer had traded ginseng for goods at his shop. Whether this shop was separate from his house is not clear. Generalizing from Loudoun's list, we can say that merchants, men and women, tended to live in houses that had rooms which the British Army considered unoccupied. Very likely, one or more of these "unoccupied" rooms in

---

<sup>22</sup> Lord Loudoun's List, 1756. Loudoun's List was drawn up in 1756 to document the housing available for quartering British soldiers in Albany. The list shows the name of the owner/occupant, the occupation, numbers of types of rooms available and occupied, and rooms with fireplaces. The list describes of 329 houses in Albany. Of the women on the list, five are listed as merchants, two as Indian traders, one as a weaver, one as a baker, and one as a mantua maker. (Loudoun Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library. I used a photocopy at the Colonial Albany Social History Project.)

merchants' houses functioned as a store in some cases.<sup>13</sup>

Women traders and retailers perhaps were perhaps even more likely to maintain their stores in their own houses.

In Albany, someone in one out of every four or five houses sold goods, with perhaps many more trading as a sideline. Loudoun's List of 1756 contained the names of 70 people involved in retailing, either as traders, merchants, or shopkeepers. This list did not include Elizabeth Sanders, or any other women who sold goods but technically were not the head of the household. Trading and commerce played a very important role here. In Massachusetts for instance, the number of taxpayers per store approximated 7.6 in Suffolk County and 10.7 in Essex County. In Albany, the ratio of households (roughly equivalent to numbers of taxpayers) to stores was approximately 4.7, suggesting a particularly dense population of people selling, and perhaps of relatively small businesses.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> John Sanders Ginseng Account Book, 1752, Schenectady, New York Historical Society; I wonder though whether a woman selling out of her house actually needed a whole room for her business. A kas or large chest such as was commonly owned by the Dutch of both New and Old World, could perhaps have served to hold whatever items were for sale. For more on the kas see Roderic H. Blackburn and Ruth Piwonka, eds. Remembrance of Patria: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America (Albany, NY: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Carole Shammas, The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 225.

If sheer numbers of people trading indicate competition then Albany should have been very competitive. In other cities, due to an increase in competition during the 1760s and 1770s, storeowners increasingly advertised with signs and decorated store windows, as well as newspaper notices. Albany, however, had little in the way of newspapers and few advertisements in the one pre-revolutionary paper that existed. For all its trading, the retailers of Albany perhaps did little advertising, relying instead on personal acquaintance and word of mouth.<sup>15</sup>

A handful of the entries on Loudoun's list are for business partnerships with nothing to suggest that the buildings occupied by these partnerships differed from ordinary houses. Fisher and MacLean apparently located their business in a 5 room house, 3 rooms of which had fireplaces. The family occupied just two rooms. As with the Sanders, the business presumably occupied one or more of the others.

Robert Sanders' business clearly required space for his wares and for the goods that he accepted in trade. In the

---

<sup>15</sup> Albany Gazette, 1771-1772. I used a photocopy at the Colonial Albany Project; Richard L. Bushman, "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," in Ronald Hoffman, Cary Carson, and Peter J. Albert, eds., Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 233-251.



year 1753, he completed more than 1000 transactions, many for large quantities of goods. At the very least, he needed a room, if not a warehouse elsewhere. Elizabeth Sanders on the other hand, made only 227 exchanges in the busiest year of her trading. While her husband sold goods to more than three hundred different people in just three months, Elizabeth Sanders sold to only 103 over the course of ten years. The scale of her business was such that a large cupboard, such as the traditional Dutch kas, could have held the bulk of the goods she sold.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the difference in scale between the trading of husband and wife, and notwithstanding the sometimes occasional nature of her business, Elizabeth Sanders' account book records something different than the petty trade of New England described by historian Laurel Ulrich, the regular exchange of small, but necessary items between women that greased the flow of the domestic economy. Many of the sales made by Elizabeth Sanders indeed consist of one or two small items, and feature an exchange between women. But consider, for instance, the merchandise purchased by Mrs. Anna Van Alen on December 27, 1753 which included 6

---

<sup>12</sup> For more on the kas see Joyce Geary Volk, "The Dutch Kast and the American Kas: A Structural Historical Analysis," in New World Dutch Studies: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America 1609-1776, ed. by Roderic H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelley, (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1987), 107-117.

ells of "Bareskin," half an ell of buckram, 3 dozen gilt buttons, 2 dozen coat buttons, 2 stocks of mohair, and 1 hank of silk. Similarly, the goods bought by Mr. Frederick Garrison on February 9, 1754 when he bought a quire of paper, a pair of men's shoes, 4 ells of blue camblet and a half pound of tea. Other patrons also picked up numerous items on more than one occasion, suggesting that Sanders' retailing consisted of something more than petty trading.<sup>17</sup>

Quantity is not the only issue that distinguishes Sanders' commercial activity from more informal exchanges. The goods that she traded were not the products of household work, but the same imported consumer goods available from established male merchants and retailers in Albany. Sanders sold various kinds of cloth, stockings, shoes, thread, skeins of silk, buttons handkerchiefs, buckles, and hats. Customers left carrying rum, tea, sugar, wine, pepper, and flour. People also left with brass kettles, shot, and an iron trap. Elizabeth Sanders sold many of the same items that her husband did. In other words, they duplicated services. The commodities that Elizabeth Sanders' customers purchased connected them to a larger commercial economy just as Robert Sanders' business did.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ulrich, Good Wives, 46-48; ESS accounts.

<sup>18</sup> Most of these purchases are for various types of fabric and sewing supplies. Bareskin for instance is a fabric and

The economy of women has been described as parallel to that of men. Laurel Ulrich suggests that in New England, women had not just separate lines of work but separate lines of trade. New England records outline an exchange system for goods and services that paralleled the more formal commercial networks. Elizabeth Sanders' account book does not really belong to a separate world of women. Her accounts include many dealings with men, and the nature of her business, that is to say retailing, tied her closely to the male-dominated commerce. Her world as seen through the account book is not the world of neighborly exchange of household goods and services. The language of the account book and the substance of its records do not reflect the day-to-day life of a household. Elizabeth and her customers clearly used the tools of the formal institutions of trade and commerce.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly women in early New York conducted business between themselves and sometimes these unrecorded dealings surfaced in the accounts of their husbands, as noted in the account book of Walter Butler of Schenectady. Butler recorded a debit to the account of Henery Dowlar in 1736,

---

not the skin of a bear, buckram is a stiffened fabric used as interfacing. For more on textiles of the eighteenth century see Florence M. Montgomery, Textiles in America, 1650-1870 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984).

<sup>19</sup>Ulrich, Good Wives, 45.

notably "to ye Ballance of yr wifes acct with my wife."  
Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Dowlar had business with each other  
differentiated from the transactions of their husbands, and  
yet referred in the settling of their husbands' accounts.<sup>15</sup>  
Elizabeth Schuyler's retailing bridged the gap between the  
commercial world of men and the informal enterprise of  
women.

One aspect of her trade that distinguished her business  
most clearly from the petty trade of women, was the  
significant number of men to whom she sold goods. In her  
shop or kitchen, her customers, male and female, encountered  
the tools of male commerce in a setting of informal  
exchange. The shopkeeping that she conducted on a small  
scale, and perhaps that conducted by other women retailers,  
opened the doors of formal exchange to people without other  
access to the consumer goods available in the eighteenth  
century.

The people that Sanders' customers Nenne Brown and  
Hillette Merriday would have seen in the streets of Albany

---

<sup>15</sup> In his dissertation, "Dutch Rural New York: Community, Economy, and Family in Colonial Flatbush," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981), 170, William John McLaughlin quotes from Washington Irving "that a Dutch farmer would 'on no account be compelled... to keep accounts in any other way than by casting them upon his fingers, and chalking them down upon the crown of his hat.;" Walter Butler Account Book, 1733-1743, W. T. Hansen Collection, NYSL.

in 1754 were a mixed group. Many passers-by, according to Swedish visitor Peter Kalm, dressed like the English, but spoke Dutch and had Dutch manners. Those Dutch manners may be what Warren Johnson referred to in 1761 after his arrival in Albany, when he wrote, "the People here are mostly Dutch & have Something Odd about them...They [do] great Trading here."<sup>11</sup>

Many, but not all, of the white women and men in Albany came from a New York Dutch background. The British Army maintained some soldiers at the fort that dominated the town along with the families of officers. The descendants of a few soldiers, or immigrants from Scotland and other colonies largely completed the numbers of white Albanians. More noticeable, or identifiable on any given day in Albany, were the blanket-draped Indians arrived from Canada, perhaps to trade with Robert Sanders, or black slaves, hurrying through the streets on errands for their masters.<sup>12</sup>

The account books of Robert and Elizabeth Sanders drew

---

<sup>11</sup> Kalm, Travels in North America, 343; James Sullivan et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany: 1921-1965), 13:185.

<sup>12</sup> Robert V. Wells figures that the percentage of blacks in Albany County at mid-century was approximately 13.9%. With a total resident population of just over 10,000 people, the number of blacks would be just under 1400, Population of the British Colonies Before 1776: A Survey of the Census Data (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 112, 122, 119, 116.

upon different and largely non-overlapping customer bases. Business interests connected these diverse groups but did not integrate them. For local merchant Robert Sanders who conducted an active trade with Canadian Indians and local white residents alike, this meant that he recorded his trade with area farmers in one day book, while confining much of his transactions with Indians to his "wampen book." He jotted a few exchanges with Indians in the end pages of his day book, and even fewer in the actual pages of that day book, perhaps transferring the notes to his wampum book at a later time. The actual substance of his inter-ethnic trade remained outside of the jurisdiction of the day book.<sup>-3</sup>

His customers then tended to be farmers, coming for goods, bringing their wheat in exchange from a number of settlements, setting out from Sghaticoke and Cocksackie, even from as far away as Schoharie. They came to Robert Sanders from both sides of the Hudson River and included people of British as well as Dutch descent. Fathers and sons traded with Sanders, cousins ran errands for each other. Numerous customers with the same last names appeared during the first three months of 1753, such as six different men named Vroman and five named Pruyn.

Robert Sanders did have women among his customers, but

---

<sup>-3</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts, end pages.

not many. Of his 994 transactions in 1750, only 5.7% involved women purchasing goods. Of the 13 women who bought things from Sanders in 1749 to 1750, those who could be identified were widows. Some had husbands with whom Robert Sanders had recently done business, such as Maria Merkel, widow of Jakob and Anna Van Alen. Perhaps two transactions per year could be attributed to Indians and while a slave might pick up goods for his owner's account, no slave bought goods in his or her own name.<sup>24</sup>

Table 1.

WOMEN INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS

<u>Merchant</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Percent</u>
R. Sanders	1750	994	57	5.7
	1753	1015	75	7.4
M. Van Bergen	1754	116	8	6.8
	1763	225	20	8.8
E. Sanders	1753	111	41	36.9
	1754	227	96	42.3

Sources: Robert Sanders Account Book, Albany, 1749-1753, Sanders Family Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collections, NYSL; Martin G. Van Bergen Day Book, Van Bergen Family Papers, NYSL; Account Book of Mrs. Robert Sanders, Albany, 1753-1763, Sanders Papers, N-YHS. I included the figures for Martin Van Bergen to illustrate that other merchants traded infrequently with women also.

Elizabeth Sanders' customers display a very different profile from that of Robert Sanders'. Nearly half of her

---

<sup>24</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts.

transactions (42.3%) for 1754 included women. Of 103 individuals in her account book, 46 were white women and 18 were slaves, more than half of those women.

Table 2.

CUSTOMERS OF ELIZABETH SANDERS

	Names	Accounts
White men:	39	40
White women:	46	52
Black women:	10	16
Black men:	8	9
Total names:	103	Total accounts: 117

Sanders' female customers were not principally widows, although widows certainly numbered among them. Historian Patricia Cleary notes that many of the customers of women retailers in other seaport cities were women and speculates that women reproduced their usual pattern of social contacts while shopping. Women, she suggests, felt more comfortable dealing with women, and so they tended to favor women merchants. Likewise men felt more comfortable dealing with men.<sup>45</sup>

However, Elizabeth Sanders' customers did not include women of her own social status, so comfort not does explain the whole story. If these women felt comfortable with her,

---

<sup>45</sup> Cleary, "She-merchants of Colonial America," 132, 134, 136-137.



it was not because she was exactly like they were, although she may have been more like them than male retailers were. As a woman, she may have had a better understanding of their shopping need than a male merchant might. Moreover, with the exception of Indians, her salesroom showed a diversity of clientele similar to the streets of Albany. On some days, black customers must have crossed paths with white men and women, all calling for similar commodities.

In sheer numbers, the retail business of Elizabeth Sanders served many more women than her husband's much larger enterprise. In 1750, he sold goods to only 13 individual women. In 1754, Elizabeth sold goods to approximately 25 women. The white women who shopped with Mrs. Sanders included more than one who also appear in men's account books. Mrs. Hilletie Merriday, for instance, appears a few years after the death of Elizabeth Sanders in the account book of William Kane.

Anna Van Alen bought goods not only from Elizabeth but from Robert, as well as from Martin Van Bergen. The day book of Robert Sanders ends approximately when Mrs. Sanders' book begins, so it is not clear that Mrs. Van Alen ever shopped at both places at once. However, Van Alen's account in Elizabeth Sanders' book stated "Brought forward from Book A, fo[lio]66 Ball[an]ce due to me...£ 0.18.7", so very likely she did shop with both of them. More to the point, Anna Van

Alen was exceptional for buying from both husband and wife. Madam Elizabeth Van Rensselaer, a prominent and wealthy widow, bought goods frequently from Robert Sanders and never from his wife, although her slaves had accounts with Elizabeth.<sup>16</sup>

Some women traveled a fair distance to shop and perhaps chat with Sanders. Many of her women customers do not show up in the files of the Colonial Albany Project, in some cases because they were not from Albany. Hilletie Merriday apparently lived north of Albany, while Mrs. Cornelis Ouderkerck and Mrs. Margriet Stenhouse likely lived in Schenectady. Mrs Teuntje Turck possibly lived in the East Manor of Rensselaerwyck across the Hudson River, while Mrs. Maria Duwebagh lived in the West Manor.<sup>17</sup>

A number of the women customers from Albany were older women, if not elderly. Mrs. Dircke Van Woert was married in 1707, making her probably somewhere around seventy when she shopped with Elizabeth Sanders. Mrs. Jeremiah Pemberton was born in 1699 placing her in her mid-50s, while Lieda Beasley was a little older having been born in 1693. Elizabeth Sanders' customers also included younger, married women such

---

<sup>16</sup>

ESS Accounts; Robert Sanders Account Book; William Kane Day Book, Albany, 1764-1792, NYSL.

<sup>17</sup> CAP files; ESS Accounts; Robert Sanders Accounts.

as Sarah Van Ieveren, probably born in 1723 and married in 1751. Nenne Brown, the wife of George Brown bore her children in 1751, 1754, 1757, and 1761, suggesting that she was relatively young at the time she shopped with Mrs. Sanders. Her sister, Wyntje Bath, was called "Mrs." in her account but either kept her maiden name or was single as no record exists of her marriage. Some of Mrs. Sanders' women customers were widows, including Cornelia Dunbar, but not all, such as Maritje Vandenburg, wife of Petrus, who did not die until 1794. Her female customers covered a much broader spectrum of age and status than her husband's.<sup>-3</sup>

Figuring largely among Elizabeth Sanders' customers were men, some of whom had few family and social connections in the Albany area. Solomon Taylor, a tavernkeeper, may have come to the area from Poughkeepsie. More than one male customer kept a dram shop or tavern in Albany while having their roots elsewhere. At least two of her male customers appear in the militia rolls for the city of Albany described

---

<sup>-3</sup> CAP files; Dirckie Barheit Van Woert married Nicholas Van Woert (2624) in 1707 and was widowed in 1725 after bearing seven children. Maria Bradt (4356) married Jeremiah Pemberton (1040) in 1723. He died sometime after 1751. Lieda Dailey Van Benthuyzen, born in 1693, married her second husband John Beasley (5402) in 1723. Mr. Beasley died prior to 1768. Sarah Ryckman (1990) born in 1723, married Martin Myndertse (also called Van Iveren) in 1751. Anne or Nenne Bath probably married George Brown sometime around 1750 but there is no known record of any marriage for her sister, Wyntjie.

as being from Ireland and another colony. Although married to a woman from a local family, Michel Philips was born in Rhode Island. Others of her customers lived outside of Albany, such as Guy Young who seems to have lived north of Schuyler Flats, while Hugh Cadogan lived somewhere nearby but not in Albany. While this picture of her male customers as outsiders does not necessarily include all of those men that bought from her, nevertheless there does appear to have been a number of outsiders among her clientele. In addition, many of the men had very short term relationships with Elizabeth Sanders. They bought from her on one or two occasions and then do not appear further.<sup>-3</sup>

Sanders sometimes identified men by their connections to women that she knew. She labelled two accounts, "Mr. Peter Hilton Magtel Wyngaards man," and "Mr. William Hilton Elizabeth Brooks man." Peter Hilton was Magtel Wyngaard's husband and her name seems to have provided him with enough substance to open an account. Magtel Wyngart died shortly after her marriage and Peter Hilton's second wife shows up delivering cash for credit on their account. Sanders, however, felt the need to describe these men, perhaps

---

<sup>-3</sup> The source of the information for the previous two paragraphs is the CAP. Only one of the men mentioned has a case number, John Van Alen (5623).

strangers to her, by more than their names.<sup>30</sup>

The retail business of Elizabeth Sanders allowed women, men with perhaps few ties to the community, and slaves, to take part in the local commercial economy, and to take part in emerging patterns of consumerism. Here we see evidence of a high status woman, recreating the ritual of exchange found between worthy men and worthier merchants, with people of lesser status than herself. Her high social status allowed her social dominance over her customers. Their lower social status largely precluded their participation in the more established local commerce of men. Even though her business allowed her customers entree to the world of goods, the store functioned as a reminder of the "place" they inhabited, part of the larger system yet segregated within it.

The means used by customers to pay for goods are particularly revealing of the niche that Elizabeth Sanders filled in the regional economy and the economy of her own household. Payments made by black and white customers reveal both the social and economic dimensions of exchange. Here we see dramatic differences in the methods of payment for the customers of Elizabeth Sanders and the customers of Robert Sanders, as well as among the various customer groups

---

<sup>30</sup> CAP files; ESS Accounts.

of Elizabeth Sanders. In the early 1750s, Robert Sanders' customers consisted largely of men who paid wheat, paying for a year's worth of goods with one January delivery. In six months of 1750, the customers of Robert Sanders paid him almost entirely in wheat. Out of 143 payments, 110 consisted only of wheat, while another 19 consisted of other types of produce such as pease. His brother John Sanders conducted a similar business a few years later in Schenectady.

Eight additional payments settled accounts in whole or part with cash. Cash here played a very small part in Robert Sanders transactions, and all the cash payments were made by men. For Elizabeth Sanders in 1754, cash also played a distinctly secondary role in the way people paid. However, both men and women made payments to her in cash, increasingly over time. By the late 1760s, many of the payments made to Elizabeth were cash. She not only took cash in payment, she lent it to customers. Well-to-do widows loaned money with some regularity in the colonial period. Shops and stores likewise functioned throughout the colonies as the only convenient facsimile of today's banks. Not surprisingly, women merchants and traders also loaned cash. Among the customers to whom Elizabeth Sanders loaned

cash were local black slaves.<sup>31</sup>

Figuring most prominently in the earlier years of the account books were payments in wampum. In direct contrast to the credits collected by Robert Sanders, payments to Elizabeth Sanders in the years before 1755 consisted largely of these black and white shell beads. White men and women paid her in wampum, while blacks never did. Sanders collected 89 payments in 1754, 55 of which consisted of wampum. Customers of Robert Sanders, on the other hand, used wampum in payment only twice.

Robert Sanders' day-to-day transactions show little evidence of him actively collecting wampum, yet his Indian trade relied on wampum and other trade goods. In the end pages of his day book, Sanders' noted that he had recorded some information in his "wampen book." This book does not apparently survive, but the reference suggests that he had a significant business collecting and selling wampum which warranted the dedication of an entire book to accounts of wampum, the details of which do not survive in his day book.

After his visit to Albany in 1749, Peter Kalm wrote that "the Indians had formerly made their own wampum... but at present it is made mostly by Europeans, especially by the

---

<sup>31</sup>Shammas, The Pre-Industrial Consumer, 245, 269; William Chester Jordan, Women and Credit in Pre-Industrial and Developing Societies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 67.

inhabitants of Albany, who make a considerable profit at it." The manufacture of wampum required little in the way of specialized tools, except for a vise to hold the shell and a hammer to break it but it did require a certain amount of patience. Large shells, at times imported from Long Island, were cut into long strips or blanks. These blanks then needed to be rounded and polished, most likely using sand as an abrasive, into a long cylinder. Drilling a central hole likely took some care, but not necessarily any great strength. Once the hole was drilled, the cylinder could be clipped into the appropriate length of beads. The actual process of making the shell beads and polishing them could as easily take place in a domestic setting as anywhere else.<sup>41</sup>

Although wampum had been used as money earlier in the colonial period, here wampum more legitimately should be viewed as a product of home manufacture. The shell beads used extensively in the Indian trade could be manufactured in the home, and by women as easily as by men. More wampum, in either white or the more expensive black beads, came from the hands of women than men, suggesting a cottage industry

---

<sup>41</sup>Elizabeth Shapiro Pena, "Wampum Production in New Netherlands and Colonial New York: The Historical and Archaeological Context," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1990), 28; Loudoun's List; ESS Accounts; Kalm, Travels in North America, 129.



or outwork that crossed gender lines. Elizabeth Sanders provided an important outlet for the production of wampum by both local men and women.

The wampum trade delineates one clear arena of common interest between Robert and Elizabeth Sanders. Elizabeth Sanders may have been collecting wampum that her husband later used in his own transactions, perhaps because of her greater contact with local women. If Elizabeth and Robert deliberately subdivided a larger family retail trade, then those pieces that involved greater contact with women might flow directly to Elizabeth.<sup>13</sup>

Sanders received payment in wampum from a total of 27 people, 14 women and 13 men. As a home industry, however, it certainly seems to have been as useful as more standard forms of employment for women, such as sewing. In the years while wampum production was strong, only one woman paid for goods by sewing. Even after, only a handful of women sewed for Sanders. In 1755, a day's sewing earned Martije Vandenburg 9 pence. There is no comparable daily wage for wampum making but at 2 shillings per 100 white wampum beads or 3 shillings for 100 black beads, the chance to accumulate

---

<sup>13</sup>Gretchen Green discusses Robert Sanders' wampum trade with Canadian Indians in her dissertation, "A New People in an Age of War: The Kahnawake Iroquois, 1667-1760," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1991), 245.

a relatively large sum of money certainly existed. Although the price had fluctuated downward somewhat, Wyntjie Bath paid Sanders in 1754 with 1000 white wampum beads at 1 shilling 9 pence per 100 and 12,320 black ones at 2 shillings 6 pence per 100, a total value of more than £ 16 on account of £ 29.

Wampum-making enjoyed an advantage over some other forms of industry in that it could be done at any time of year. Unlike agricultural work, it was not seasonal, and not subject to the constraints of weather. The trade in wampum, however, was governed by political and diplomatic forces beyond the control of the bead-makers and buyers.

Payment with wampum appears to have been relatively short-lived. The eruption of hostilities with Canada in mid-decade cut off Sanders' trade. After the end of 1754, women in particular were forced to find alternate means of payment. In 1756, only 2 men on Loudoun's list called themselves wampum makers.

Consider for instance the cases of Mrs. Cornelia Denbar (Dunbar) and Mrs. Jacob Harty. Cornelia Dunbar's payments included the following.

1753

Nov 26	By 900 Black wampen @ 3/ pr 100	£ 1. 7.-
Dec 7	By 500 Black wampen @ 3/ pr 100	.15.-
April 23	By 675 Black wampen @ 3/ pr 100	1.--.-
May 3	By 500 Black Do @ 3/ pr 100	.15.-
Sep 19	By 1300 Wh Do @ 1/9 pr 100	1. 2. 9

1754	Feb 7	By 1000 Wh Do @ 1/9 pr 100	.17.6 ? unclear £ 5.17.3
1755	June 30	By making of 21 Bags @ 2d a ps	. 3.6
	July	By making 4 Do @ 2d a ps	.8
	Do 16	By making of 10 Indian Shirts @ 6d a ps	.5.--
1756		By Spining of 3 W Cotton @ 2/ pr W	. 6.--
	May 31	By making of 13 Bags @ 3 a ps	. 3.3
	Dec 10	By Spining of 1 1/2 W Cotton @ 1/6 pr	2.3
			£ 1. . 8
1760	March 11	By Cash in full	1. 3.4 £ 2. 4.-

The Seven Years' War had brought an abrupt close to the trade in wampum. The accounts of Cornelia Dunbar show a clear progression in types of payment over the years. Initially dependent on wampum, Dunbar switched to another skill, when the situation demanded it. Finally, as cash became increasingly important, the specific goods made by Dunbar's no longer formed the basis of her purchases. Mrs. Harty's payments also reflect a trend away from paying with wampum. Instead of marching in a steady progression from wampum to sewing to cash, she began in 1754 with payments of wheat, wampum, cash, and more wampum. In 1755, she paid by weaving woolen cloth and linen and with cash. In 1758, she paid again by weaving linen. By the 1760s, customers and merchants alike relied much more heavily on cash.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Wampum was not entirely eliminated from the regional trade, however. Andries Truax of Schenectady continued dealing in wampum well into the 1760s, although his receipts do not show the source of the wampum he traded. Receipt of

The sewing that Cornelia Dunbar did consisted of making bags and Indian shirts. Mrs. Harty did no sewing but she did weave quantities of woolen and linen cloth, perhaps to be used by the Sanders' household, either for them or to clothe their slaves. Other women sometimes sewed for Sanders as well. Some of this sewing relates to trading such as the 8 Indian shirts sewn by Maria Graveraet for 6 pence a piece, but the "12 new Small Shirts" for 18 shillings total and the 2 women's caps and 6 men's caps were likely for the Sanders family. In 1756, Maritje Vandenberg, used credit for 75 1/2 days of sewing to pay for goods in trade and in 1757, she paid with 80 1/2 days of sewing. This substantial amount of sewing may very well have contributed to the family's clothing needs, freeing Elizabeths Sanders' hands for other, less tedious work.

If the work of her customers lightened Sanders' sewing load, then being a slave owner also contributed to relieving the workload associated with having several young children. Sanders very likely was not the person who disinfected the sickroom with vinegar after her son died. Help from these two sources may have allowed Sanders' the extra time needed for keeping her books and looking after her inventory. Many

---

do not show the source of the wampum he traded. Receipt of Andries Truax, bill from Jacob Lansing, March 6, 1767 (in Dutch); Receipts of Abraham and Andries Truax, Truax Family Papers, NYSL.

other women who acted as traders or retailers did so without the burden of a young family.

Sanders was not alone as a female retailer in Albany. While she is not listed on Lord Loudoun's list of 1756, several other women are noted as merchants. Many of the female retailers in Albany that appear on Loudoun's list or in other sources, have names that link them to the New York Dutch. For instance, the women merchants and traders on Loudoun's List include Mrs. Schuyler, Nilky Van Vaika (Neeltie Van Vechten), Nilhy (Neeltie) Defreest, Widow Onyla (Cornelya?) Wendell, Mrs. Gerret Rosecomb. Also on the list and less clearly Dutch in origin, although likely mistaken by the Englishman writing the list, are Widow Helen Fisher (Vischer) and Widow Yanky (Jannetje?) Caulder. Not coincidentally, the list consists almost entirely of widowed women. As mentioned previously, unless a woman were the head of household, her commercial activities would not have been noted.

Most of the women traders and retailers who can be identified in the records were widows, many (but not all) of whom had had husbands in commerce. The women merchants and traders of New York City included several who took up shopkeeping even though their husbands had very different occupations. In addition, the women who carried on a retail business often had a relatively high social status.

Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders herself came from one of the most important local families. Margaret Schuyler Schuyler, called "Big Madam Schuyler" by one local tradesman, was a member of that same family both by birth and marriage. A cousin by blood and an aunt by marriage to Elizabeth Sanders, Loudoun's List of 1756 identified Madam Schuyler. The Roseboom and Van Vechten families likewise claimed female merchants and high status. Other women traders claimed prominence not from their families but as a consequence of their husbands' active roles in land speculation and trading, as in the case of Sarah Maginn.<sup>15</sup>

Family traditions may have played some part in women acquiring a knowledge of business. Elizabeth Sanders may well have considered her aunt, Big Madam Schuyler as someone to emulate. Similarly, Elizabeth may have passed on some of her own mercantile awareness to her eldest daughter, Maria. After the deaths of Elizabeth and Robert Sanders, his brother, John, guardian of the five children, wrote to Robert's business associates criticizing their accounting of Robert's affairs. He noted that the Rays' accounting

---

<sup>15</sup>Jean P. Jordan, "Women Merchants in Colonial New York," New York History 58(1977):412-438, 416. Jordan notes that a few women merchants or retailers were unmarried; Cleary, "She-Merchants of Colonial America," 112.; For "Big Madam" see The Unidentified Account Book of a Retail Merchant, Albany, 1760-65, NYSL.

disagreed with what "my Brother Dec[ease]d Tould me & his Daughr Maria Tells me." At 17 years of age, Maria Sanders knew enough about business to know how often the Rays should submit an accounting. At least one young woman in the province of New York systematically acquired a knowledge of business, presumably from her youth in the household of her parents.<sup>36</sup>

General economic conditions specific to the colonies also contributed to the participation of women in retailing and trading. As many as four hundred women or "she-merchants" may have operated retailing businesses of one kind or another in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia between 1750 and 1775. These businesses ranged from the extensive merchandising of Mary Alexander of New York City to the numerous women who sold a few things occasionally. Elizabeth Sanders' business in Albany fell between these two extremes. For some years, her account book clearly shows more than a casual interest in selling, although in other years she sold very little.<sup>37</sup> Historian Patricia Cleary

---

<sup>36</sup>John Sanders Book of Bonds and Notes, 1754-1768, N-YHS.

<sup>37</sup>The term "she-merchants" was used in the eighteenth-century and has been perpetuated by Elizabeth Anthony Dexter, Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions before 1776 (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1931) and by Patricia Cleary. For numbers of women in retailing see Cleary, "'She-Merchants' of Colonial America," 78, 205. Unfortunately, Cleary provides no precise description or list of the women, or how she decided whether they were

speculates that the very active colonial economy encouraged the entry of women into the field of retailing. Women retailers in the major port cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston were most numerous in the period between 1750 and 1780, with their numbers peaking in the 1760s.

Seaports, with their ready access to imported goods, provided the strongest incentives for women to merchandise. Some urban merchants even maintained contacts with women in rural or undeveloped areas, allowing women in more isolated areas to enter the commercial arena. In Boston during this period, Elizabeth Murray advocated the entry of young women into trading. The rise of urban poverty that coincided with an explosion of goods exported from Great Britain during this period may also have led to more commercial activity for women, as male and female city residents scrambled to survive difficult economic situations.<sup>32</sup>

Elizabeth Sanders' book gives no indication of how she acquired her stock-in-trade. None of the letters and

---

retailers, or what kind of businesses they might have run, or whether she could tell how long they stayed in business. She does include a short discussion of the duration of some businesses.

<sup>32</sup>Cleary, "She-merchants of Colonial America," 89, 91; Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 253, 257.



account books of Robert Sanders contain any reference to the funneling of goods to his wife. However, there were women to whom he sold significant quantities of goods. Women traders in Albany obtained the goods they sold largely from the more established merchants, reselling the items as their own stock. Just as his male customers included other merchants or traders, some of his female customers could have been retailers or traders.<sup>39</sup>

Martin Gerritsen Van Bergen purchased quantities of goods in New York City, shipping them to Albany for specific customers, some of whom were women, all of whom appear to have been commercial traders of one kind or another. The women who bought from him had standard marks for their barrels and casks, just as the men did. Neeltie Van Vechten for instance marked her containers N.V.V., while SM was Sarah Maginn and MH stood for Mary Hogan. In addition to the goods bought specifically for her in New York such as "100 # Loaf sugar...1 box pipes...2 boxes Limmons...1 barrell [tobacco] NVV," Neeltie Van Vechten bought large quantities of goods retail from Martin Van Bergen. In 1756, on one occasion she purchased, not only her hogshead of rum plus freight and cartage, but "14 # coffee...20 yards white Napp...1 Dozyn Steal Shoe Buckles...1 Ditto Knee Ditto...1

---

<sup>39</sup>Robert Sanders Accounts.

Dozyn Narrow Combs...1 Dozyn Wide Ditto...2 ps ferretan...1  
Dozyn Cottoes...1/2 Gross Buttons...1 Chist Loaf...the  
Chist...30 # paper Tobacco...3 Dozyn # Chocolate...freight  
of the above things." She paid most of her bill of more  
than £ 32 in cash. This list of items appears far too  
extensive for one person's personal use and indeed, Neeltie  
Van Vechten identified herself as a merchant on Loudoun's  
list.<sup>45</sup>

Sarah Maginn, the widow of Teddy Maginn, known to Sir  
William Johnson, not only ordered goods from Martin Van  
Bergen, but took advantage of many small opportunities to  
trade. She sold cattle when she could, and took part in  
various land transactions as an active speculator. The  
widow Anna Van Alen bought large quantities of goods from  
Robert Sanders, such as 7 dozen pipes and 20 pounds of  
sugar, as well as goods from Martin Van Bergen. These women  
likely did not have their own commercial contacts in New  
York City, but instead bought through local merchants who

---

<sup>45</sup>Martin Van Bergen Memorandum Book for his Sloop 1763-1772, Van Bergen Family Papers, New York State Library; Martin G. Van Bergen, his Day Book in Albany, 1749/50-1765, NYSL, Van Bergen Family Papers, Nov. 27, 1756; For more on Albany's merchants and their trading habits see, David Arthur Armour, The Merchants of Albany, New York, 1686-1760 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986). Edna L. Jacobsen discussed the mercantile activities of Martin G. Van Bergen but made no mention of his female customers in her article, "Eighteenth-Century Merchants in Colonial Albany," Dutch Settlers Society of Albany Yearbook, XX(1944-45): 5-15 .

did have those contacts. Two women who bought extensively from Robert Sanders may have come from Schoharie, some miles southwest of Albany. The purchases made from him by the women traders consisted largely of fabrics and sewing supplies, and grocery items such as sugar and tea. The fact that many of the fabric purchases consisted of relatively small quantities of material, such as 3 ells of shalloon or 2 1/4 ells of broadcloth, suggests that the women ordered goods for specific customers. A veritable chain of sales thus connected the larger merchants to the individual customer. The connecting links to the customers could be formed by women, as well as by men.<sup>42</sup>

The widowed Madam Schuyler, however, was known as more than a trader, or sometime retailer. The author of Loudoun's List clearly considered her a merchant. Yet, when Anne Grant wrote her Memoirs of An American Lady in the early nineteenth-century, about her childhood years spent with Madam Schuyler, she failed to identify any commercial

---

<sup>42</sup>For Sarah Maginn (sometimes Maginnes), see Johnson Papers 3: 288-89, 297; Martin G. Van Bergen Day Book, June 7, 1763; For Anna Van Alen see for instance, Roberts Sanders Account Book, Sept. 15, 1749; Martin G. Van Bergen Day Book, Aug. 15, 1756; ESS Account Book, Nov. 10, 14, 18, 1753; Margaret Feeck and Engeltie Uziel both made visits to Robert Sanders in 1749/50 buying large quantities of goods. Robert Sanders Account Book, Jan. 24, 1749/50 and Feb. 1, 1749/50. Both family names could be from the Schoharie area as per Florence Christoph, Upstate New York in the 1760s: Tax Lists and Selected Militia Rolls of Old Albany County (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1992).

activity on the part of her mentor. She saw instead, Madam Schuyler after the battle of Fort Ticonderoga, "scattering bounty to wounded soldiers, and poor women and children." Grant commented on the beneficence of Madam to "the wretched widows and orphans who had remained here, and had lost their all." It may be that women merchants and traders expended any financial rewards they earned in a different manner than successful male merchants, but it may also be that Anne Grant misunderstood or misrepresented Madam Schuyler's activities, thus robbing her actions of any serious economic meaning.<sup>42</sup>

As a married woman trading, Elizabeth Sanders' trade did not operate in a setting closed off from the rest of her domestic life. Robert Sanders kept a watchful eye on Elizabeth's accounts, sometimes making entries in his wife's book, in his distinctive handwriting. Since "Book B" is an account book and not a day book, the entries likely were recorded at date later than the date of the transaction. Robert Sanders perhaps copied information to satisfy himself that his wife's books were kept current, and perhaps he did it as a favor to her. Most of the transcriptions contain no

---

<sup>42</sup> Anne MacVicar Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of manners and Scenes in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972, originally published 1901), II: 34, 33.

additional comment on the part of Robert Sanders, but occasionally he made his own thoughts plain.

Following a 1754 entry for credit, from Mrs. Wyntjie Bath, Robert Sanders wrote, "allowed by my wife on this Acco: Becaus Mrs Anne Brown undertook to pay this acco: for her sister Wyntje for wch Credit her on her Notes she this day gave me for the Ballice." In a 1758 entry, following this remark, he noted, "Mrs Nenne Brown gave me her Note to pay it in wampum by ye 14 Sepbr Next [unclear] Else in Cash as may appear pr ld: Notes" followed by "NB May 25, Mrs Nenne Brown pd: this above notes of hand." Interestingly, Robert Sanders never took women's notes as payment in his own account book, yet here he deemed this form of payment acceptable.<sup>43</sup>

Robert Sanders' oversight of his wife's accounts suggests the limits of her autonomy in her trading. In the Sanders' household, Elizabeth's accounts were not private, in the sense of being closed to her husband. He expressed his concern with her business through his attention to the details of her trading. But his comments here also suggest the limits of his interests. He implicitly recognized the authority of her judgment in taking the notes for Nenne Brown to pay off Wyntje Bath's debts, while making it plain

---

<sup>43</sup>Jordan, "Women Merchants in Colonial New York," 416-417; Cleary, "She-merchants of Colonial America," 240.

that he might not have done the same thing. When he recorded the acceptance of Mrs. Brown's notes of hand, he likewise acknowledged that the rules of commerce for women transacting business together might diverge from the rules governing trade between a male merchant and a female customer. Despite Robert's participation, Elizabeth's business remained distinct, or at least separate, from his.

The perception of colonial women as knowledgeable about business and commerce has been controversial among historians. Certainly not all women were and certainly being a widow gave a woman a freedom not otherwise available. The reduction of this historiographical conversation to whether the eighteenth-century was a "golden age" for women, obscures the fact that economic autonomy and social power do not always go hand-in-hand. Women retailers could enjoy some economic autonomy and access to profits without gaining political position. As historian Laurel Ulrich points out it was permissible for women to take on commercial roles, but not at all probable that they would.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> See for instance Mary Beth Norton's discussion of the economic life of colonial women in the 1980 Preface to Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Ulrich, Good Wives, 36 ;For other examples of commercially engaged people with no real political power, think about the mulattos in Haiti before the Haitian revolution, or the Jews in the shtetls of Poland before World War II.

In the province of New York, the acceptability of women as retailers may have been accentuated by the long-standing Dutch traditions of including women in business. However, in other colonies, such as Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, women also took in active role in retailing, so certainly the heritage of the New York Dutch did not function alone in promoting the participation of women in business.<sup>45</sup>

Selling similar goods, keeping similar records, possibly operating out of the same premises as her husband, Elizabeth Sanders nevertheless filled a particular niche in the commercial world of Albany.<sup>46</sup> Her autonomy was not complete, but the richness of her commercial experiences

---

<sup>45</sup> For examples of women of Dutch heritage, participating in commerce in New York, see May King van Rensselaer, The Goede Vrouw of Man-a-hat-a: At Home and in Society, 1609-1760 (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [c1898]); Patricia Cleary's dissertation, "'She merchants' of Colonial America," discusses women from New York as well as women from Philadelphia and Boston. In her article, "'Who shall say we have not equal abilitys with the Men when Girls of 18 years of age discover such great capacitys?': Women of Commerce in Boston, 1750-1776'" in Entrepreneurs: The Boston Business Community, 1700-1850," edited by Conrad Edick Wright and Katelyn Viens, Cleary concentrates on the commercial activities of Elizabeth Murray (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), pp. 39-62.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth and Robert Sanders did not charge different prices for their goods. During the early 1750s, tea consistently cost 8 shillings a pound, whether the buyer was black or white. The purchase price of fabric varied slightly, but not with a noticeable pattern. They both charged 2/6 an ell for shalloon, and 4/ per ell for calico. Shalloon sometimes cost 3/ an ell, but this was not apparently connected to the race of the purchaser, or to the seller, in these cases.

existed in a balance with the demands of her household, and the companionship she shared with her husband. Serving a different clientele than her husband, her business complemented the male commercial world, by providing access to consumer goods for people, such as slaves, who were otherwise marginalized by commercial society.

In the years after 1758, the business of Elizabeth Sanders went into decline. The number of transactions per year dropped precipitously, as perhaps not coincidentally, the number of small children in the Sanders household rose. Nearly all of the decline occurred in her white customers. Mrs. Sanders' black customers continued to visit her. After her death in 1763, her husband made an effort to close some of her outstanding accounts, noting, for instance, a credit to the account of Mrs. Engeltie Waldron, "By your Acco: of Sewing for my wife & Since her Death for my Children pr yr accot Delivered to me this Day." He did more than settle accounts, however. He also kept selling things, recording the purchases in his wife's book. Engeltie Waldron, in fact, not only settled her account, but bought bran. However, the vast majority of the sales he made, and the majority of the credits he received, were with black customers.<sup>47</sup> Even though these black customers made regular

---

<sup>47</sup> ESS Accounts.



payments, did not accumulate large debts, and were regular customers, Robert Sanders kept them outside of his overall customer base. The fact that Robert Sanders continued his late wife's accounts, and made no apparent effort to absorb these customers into his own business, suggests that he viewed these customers as separate from his interests, although well within the purview of Elizabeth Sanders' trading. The next chapter explores the position of Sanders' black customers in the commercial economy of Albany.

## Chapter 2.

### African-American Consumers in the Segregated Economy of Albany

The inclusive nature of New York's commercial economy provided a small space for slaves as consumers. The stratified nature of colonial society, however, enforced strict rules for that participation. The opening in the retail trade for African-Americans owed its existence to the hierarchical economy that developed hand-in-hand with the social hierarchy. Blacks living in Albany and the surrounding towns responded to ambiguous cultural guidelines for a consumerism that encouraged individual choice but set the choices in a particularly limited framework. That framework structured black consumerism by restricting the places where African Americans could buy goods, and the forms that payment could take, rather than by dictating what goods slaves could buy. Black consumers shopped with only a few of the many retailers in the Albany area. Issues of gender, race, and commerce converged as white women sold goods to slaves and thus drew blacks into the formal white economy of New York.

A reliable stream of inexpensive goods from Great Britain meant that "being poor and being a consumer were no longer mutually exclusive." Slavery did not convey immunity from the attractions of consumer goods. African-Americans in colonial New York participated in the larger consumer world and that consumerism shaped both their working lives and their cultural expressions.<sup>2</sup> Colonial African-Americans did not act uniformly as consumers, however. The larger Anglo-European society of the province of New York contained divisions based on status and so too did African-American society. Consumer habits developed in response to the status and gender of blacks as well as to their cultural preferences.

Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders, a slaveholder herself, seems to have been a favorite resource for goods for some blacks. Sanders occupied a position that spanned two worlds. She had a personal acquaintance with her black customers and the social position to conduct her business.<sup>3</sup> Other merchants did occasionally sell goods to slaves. In Schenectady, John Sanders, the brother-in-law of Elizabeth Sanders, sold items to his own slaves in the late 1760s,

---

<sup>2</sup> Carole Shammas, The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Account Book of Mrs. Robert Sanders, Albany, New York, 1753-1764, Sanders Family Papers, N-YHS (Hereafter ESS Accounts).

keeping their accounts at the back of his day book. John Bradt sold several items to "the Negro of My father London," in 1770. An unidentified Mohawk Valley trader also sold a few goods to area blacks in the late 1760s and early 1770s, but again recorded transactions with slaves at the back of his account book. Exchanges with blacks represented rare entries and were not recorded as part of the routine business of the retailer. London's account with John Bradt appears at the end of a section of daily transactions, and written in as an account rather than the usual day book entry. John Sanders relegated these small accounts to the last few pages of his book, symbolically segregating the accounts of his slaves. In actuality, this segregation was more than symbolic.<sup>3</sup>

The separation of slaves' purchases from the purchases of white consumers reflected the stratified nature of eighteenth-century society and the segregation of places where the presence of slaves was acceptable. Black

---

<sup>3</sup> John Sanders and Jacob Glen Account Book, Schenectady, 1752-1765 and 1765-1771, N-YHS; John Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1762-1780, NYSL; Account Book of an Unidentified Indian Trader of the Mohawk Valley, 1762-1776, found in the papers of Jelles Fonda, N-YHS; Historian Elizabeth A. Perkins notes that several slaves bought goods from a merchant in late eighteenth-century Kentucky but does not mention how these were recorded in relation to other entries., "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," Journal of American History 54(1991):486-510.

customers faced restrictions in access reminiscent of societies that practiced forms of economic or cultural segregation. In white's eyes, slaves might belong in a kitchen but did not fit as readily into a scene set in a shop. As we have seen in the previous chapter, economic transactions were not exempt from the social requirements of a hierarchical world. Social status affected both access to credit and access to goods. Elizabeth Sanders' inclusion of slave accounts right along with all her other accounts mirrored her admittance of slaves to the world of consumer goods in her shop. African-Americans faced restrictions, but also unexpected opportunities to express themselves in this commercial economy.

Slavery existed in the Dutch colony of New Netherlands from the early days of settlement. Although important to the society and economy, slavery did not come to dominate the system as it did in the Southern colonies. The New York Dutch of the Hudson Valley were certainly a slave-owning society, but not a slave society. That is, although slavery was not uncommon, slave labor did not supply a major portion of the economy's labor demands, nor did slavery play an extensive role in commerce.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Philip D. Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans," in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire (Chapel Hill: University of North

Africans and African-Americans never formed more than a minority of the population. In 1749, the population of the province of New York contained over 73,000 people. Of these, about 14.4% were black. The entire county of Albany had a population that was 13.9% black who concentrated in the city of Albany. Between the 1720s and the 1770s, the black population of Albany County grew from approximately 800 to over 3700. By 1790, the city of Albany contained almost 600 black slaves, in a population of nearly 3500. Eighteenth-century observers noted the presence of these black Albanians. Peter Kalm, a mid-century visitor from Sweden, for instance noted that "the servants in the town are chiefly Negro." The black population and the white population each showed higher proportions of men than women, with the difference even more striking among blacks. In addition, across the whole colony, Africans and African-Americans had fewer children per adults than the whites did, presumably as a function of the conditions of slavery.<sup>5</sup>

---

Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 157-219, 163; Joyce Goodfriend, "Burghers and Blacks: The Evolution of A Slave Society in New Amsterdam," New York History 59(1978):125-144, argues that by 1664, New Amsterdam was a slave society. However, Morgan's more recent definition and the structure of the Albany area economy suggest that this was not the case in the eighteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Robert V. Wells, Population of the British Colonies Before 1776: A Survey of the Census Data (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 112, 122, 119, 116; Peter Kalm, Peter Kalm's Travels in North America, edited by

In eighteenth-century New York, slaveholders tended to own small numbers of slaves, generally one to three per household. In Flatbush, for example, in 1755, 51 households in the town owned 108 slaves, with the largest single group being seven slaves in one household. The Sanders household included at least three slaves. When Robert Sanders died shortly after his wife, his will specified that his daughter Maria should receive his "Negrowench Brit", while his five children together shared his "Negro man and woman." Hudson Valley slaveholder Hendrick Douw owned six slaves at the time that he wrote his will, distributing them unevenly among his five children. The son who inherited the land, received two men and one young woman, while another son received no slaves according to the will. This father assigned his slaves according to where they would be usefully employed by his children.<sup>6</sup>

Not all households owned slaves but slavery nevertheless permeated the society. Although the economy of the province never became overwhelmingly dependent on

---

Adolph B. Benson, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987) 346.

<sup>6</sup> William John McLaughlin, "Dutch Rural New York: Community, Economy, and Family in Colonial Flatbush," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981) 189, 195; Robert Sanders Will, Albany, 1765, original at the New York Hall of Records. I used a photostat at the Albany Institute of History and Art; Will of Hendrick Douw, June 6, 1749, Bratt Family Papers, NYSL.

slavery, local economies provided access to the labor of slaves even for those who did not own them. In 1748, Hendrick Cuyler paid Evert Wendell for the work of Wendell's female servant Brit, "who scoured at his house 3 days at 2/ [2 shillings] pr day." Likewise in 1750 and 1751, Cuyler paid to have Brit clean his house for two days. In the back pages of his account book, Joseph Yates kept a list of the work that his bondsman, Sem, did for other people during the years 1758 and 1759. In 1759, for instance, Sem did farm work for Harmen Arent Vedder for 11 days, as recorded by Yates "min Neger In der bouw Gewerk 11 Dage, 2.4.0." Access to the labor of a hired slave enabled more people to take advantage of slavery. Though such arrangements took place between slaveholders, some slaves may have profited from these transactions.<sup>7</sup>

Work assignments spelled out by white owners affected

---

<sup>7</sup> Evert Wendell Account Book, Albany, 1708-1758, N-YHS; Joseph Yates Account Book, 1749-1769 (in Dutch), W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL; New Yorkers also sometimes owned Indian slaves but these slaves were both expensive and hard to come by. William Johnson and his correspondents called Indian slaves "Panis slaves," James Sullivan et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965) (hereafter Johnson Papers), 3:321-322, 348; 4:95-96. Eleazer Wheelock and other New Englanders sometimes called Indians "blacks" but this does not seem to have occurred in New York where Dutch New Yorkers clearly distinguished between Indians and African or African-American slaves using "Negro" or "Negrowench", or the Dutch terms "Neger" or "Negerin." For an example of Wheelock's use of "black", see W. Deloss Love, Samson Occum and the Christian Indians of New England (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1899), 92.



the status of black women as well. African-American women frequently found that their relationship to the whites in charge shaped their daily lives and their own limited economic opportunities. These opportunities were skewed by gender as well as race.<sup>5</sup>

Local black residents felt the pull of commerce as much as did other inhabitants of Albany County. Slaves in the north often had a higher status in the eyes of the white community than did free blacks because slaves filled roles that brought honor to masters. Male slaves had greater access to a wider variety of occupations and could work and earn money using their skills as craftsmen while free blacks were often prohibited from practicing trades, whether by custom or law. Attempts by a group of free blacks to establish their own settlement in the Mohawk Valley were met by suspicion and alarm by Sir William Johnson and his correspondents. Eve Pickard, a Mohawk Valley tavern owner referred to in documents as a mulatto, repeatedly found herself in disputes that took issue with her actions and her

---

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Gray White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985), 128-132; 46-61. As White makes clear, the higher status accorded the myth of Mammy does not by any means suggest that these house servants had easy lives. For examples of slave women turning their relationships with their owners to their own purposes see Hilary McD. Beckles, Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

independence. She did not follow the rules as the local whites understood them, involving herself and her grown children in schemes to defraud Indians of land, presumably to improve her own situation. Other free blacks had perhaps more success than she did. Warren Johnson wrote in his journal that "[t]here are many free Negroes here who have good Estates."

Slaves in the Hudson-Mohawk area did not draw the same distinction between free blacks and bondspeople that many whites did. They understood the difference of course, but socially, the free and the enslaved interacted extensively. The journal of the Reverend Ogilvie contains numerous references to marriages between free and enslaved blacks, such as in 1754 when he baptized "Rachel Datr of Charles Slave of Ephraim Wemple & Susannah his Wife a free Woman." That same year he baptized a boy, Charles, the son of "Simon a free man & Sarah a Negroe Wench Slave of Widow Mary Butler." Sanders did not specifically refer to any of her customers as free blacks but the account of Brit Van de Mulen may show the exceptional free black who bought from her. Brit is a name not used commonly except for slaves, and slaves never were noted as having last names, so the

---

Johnson Papers 1:8; 3:339; 13:201; William D. Pierson, Black Yankees: The Development of Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 46-47.

possibility exists that this Brit was a free black woman.<sup>13</sup>

Albany area households did not commonly employ large numbers of slaves, probably not enough to establish much of a hierarchy among slaves of a single household. However, the town of Albany and its surroundings certainly contained enough African-Americans to support a stratified community in keeping with both the local white society and the cultural influences of an African heritage. The eighteen slaves that purchased goods from Elizabeth Schuyler drew on their personal acquaintanceships with Sanders when they shopped for new consumer goods in that formalized setting of exchange. Their connection to families recognized as socially important to Sanders gave these blacks a privileged access to consumer goods. Many of those listed belonged to members of Elizabeth Sanders' family, such as "Father Peter Schuylers Negroman Mink," or "Uncle Jacob Glens Negro Piet." The slaveholder of Cate and Lane, two black women, was Elizabeth Sanders father-in-law, Barent Sanders. Other blacks were identified as belonging to prominent members of the community such as "Patroons Negrowench Deen." Prominent slaves in the north derived some measure of their status within the black community by their association with their socially important white owners. The servant of a

---

<sup>13</sup> Diary of the Reverend John Ogilvie, 1750-, Typescript at NYSL; Brit Van de Mulen Account, ESS Accounts.

politically important white man, for instance, could be recognized in both the black and white communities as an individual of higher stature than an ordinary slave.<sup>22</sup>

It is unclear whether Elizabeth Sanders was one of a number of people who regularly sold goods to local blacks, or whether she performed an unusual role. Given the hundreds of blacks who lived in Albany during the 1750s, it seems unlikely that noone else sold regularly to slaves. The eighteen blacks who bought goods from Mrs. Sanders over the ten years that she kept her accounts, were a select few of the perhaps 1500 African-Americans living in Albany County at mid-century.<sup>23</sup>

The slaves that visited Elizabeth Sanders store did not all have owners who lived within the city or town limits. A few traveled a little distance from where they lived. Bat and Susan both came from Niskayuna where Eldert Teymonson lived. Slaves in the Hudson-Mohawk area could travel fair distances on errands for their owners. This mobility generally extended only to male slaves. The ferry across the Hudson from Half-moon carried slaves with wagons and horses, presumably traveling for the owner but not with him.

---

<sup>22</sup> Pierson, Black Yankees, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Wells states that in 1749, 13.9% of Albany County's resident population of 10,636 were black, suggesting that approximately 1500 blacks lived in Albany County. Population of the British Colonies, 112.

In 1756, Margaret Collins paid Henry Van Dreisen "for his Negro men in going to N. York." Female slaves might do errands but primarily in town, such as when Mr. Hansen's "Negro wench" took "50 Lemmons" to Richard Miller in Albany. On the other hand, trust only went so far. When James Willson sent a black serving woman to William Johnson, she was accompanied by Thomas Allman.<sup>13</sup>

Evidence that the work of female slaves extended much beyond housework is rare. The qualifications cited in newspaper advertisements for the sale of female slaves related strictly to housework. When John Lindsay wrote from Oswego to William Johnson in 1750, he asked for a female slave to help his wife, to do his wife's work for her. He begged of Johnson, "I give you the trouble again to entreat you to buy me a Negro winch & send her as soon as possible, there is no woman here to assist or serve my wife & as she is on[e] of ye best am not able to see her undergo what she does at present...my wife is sickly and needs on[e] to attend her rather than to be obliged to serve herself and others."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Jacob Lansing, *His Book, Half-moon*, 1773, Jacob Lansing Papers, NYSL; Martin G. Van Bergen Day-Book, April 7, 1756, Albany, 1749/50-1765. Van Bergen Family Papers, NYSL; Johnson Papers 1:373, 381. The fact that Allman accompanied her was also for her protection I expect.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Soderlund describes a similar urban situation in Philadelphia in her article, "Black Women in Colonial

In a frontier setting the lack of established female networks, and indeed, the lack of women altogether, made the housewifery skills of black women even more desirable. When a young black woman with a child was offered for sale in Michilimackinac in 1771, traders openly competed to buy her. William Maxwell wrote his friend William Edgar in Detroit that she was "a fine wench sows and does all Housework speaks good English and French." The man selling her set the price at £ 120 pounds, more than double the price paid two years earlier for a woman and child in Albany County.<sup>15</sup>

---

Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 107(1983):49-68; In more rural settings, black women faced a different type of work, as noted by Lorena Walsh in "The Experience and Status of Women in the Chesapeake, 1750-1775," in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Sammler, Jr. and Jon L. Wakelyn eds., The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 13-14; Albany Gazette, August 3, 1772 and November 25, 1772; Johnson Papers, 1:299-300; Jacqueline Jones notes that the history of the black female work experience is tied closely to the history of the black family. Thus if a black woman spent her work life doing the housework of a white family, she might have no opportunity to care in a similar way for her own family. "Race, Sex, and Self-Evident Truths: The Status of Slave Women during the Era of the American Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., Women in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989) p.293-337, 305.

<sup>15</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, August 4, 1771, William Edgar Letters, 1750-1787, photostats at PAC, originals at the New York Public Library. Maxwell schemed to keep the young woman out of the hands of one trader, saying his friend, Edgar had already bespoken her when he had not and then sent her on to Edgar with only a slim promise for payment. As it turned out, the man who sold her did not have the right to do so as he was only looking after her for

Mrs. Sanders' account book shows a quality and level of interaction not often explored. Discussions of the economic life of slaves tend to focus either on the work routine established by the slaveholder, or less frequently, on the interaction between slaves nearly hidden from the surrounding white community.<sup>14</sup> In Albany, the account book of Elizabeth Sanders shows slaves participating in the formal economy developed by white males. The records are those of the formal economy, the means of payment and the goods purchased all form part of the standard commercial system. The work revealed by the account is not the work demanded by slaveholders. This source reveals a piece of black economic life that depended on the intersection of black interests with formal white economic institutions.

New York's African-Americans took advantage of resources they could control, as did slaves elsewhere. No

---

a friend. The issue was not resolved for more than two years; Auction of David Verplanck Estate, Coeymans, 1769, Ten Eyck Family Papers, AIHA.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Betty Wood, Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995) and Philip D. Morgan, "The Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Low Country," Journal of Southern History, 49(1983): 399-420; For a discussion of slave labor in the Hudson Valley, see A.J. Williams-Myers, "Hands That Picked No Cotton: An Exploratory Examination of African Slave Labor in the Colonial Economy of the Hudson River Valley to 1800," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History, 11(1987): 25-51.

blacks offered work of any kind as a payment, perhaps understanding that work time was not theirs to give away, or perhaps not wanting to spend their time doing any more of that work. Black women thus never sewed for credit, as white women did. They did not offer butter or dairy products in exchange for goods. The work of black women that potential slaveholders openly admired was not the work that black women used to buy goods. The nature of payments made to the accounts of Mrs. Sanders point to a wider range of activities than simply cleaning and cooking.

The work and the products of work that black New Yorkers exchanged for goods had to be something that retailers, especially Mrs. Sanders, would accept in trade. Black New Yorkers needed some way of obtaining value for their work in order to buy the goods they desired. Unfree blacks shaped the work of their "free" time to produce acceptable items for exchange, while exercising control over what they chose to do.

The gardening of Albany blacks played a major role in consumer exchange. Many of the credits to the accounts of Mrs. Sanders' black customers took the form of garden produce. Anne Grant noted the presence of cottages in the pine barrens between Albany and Schenectady. "These cottages," she wrote, "were in summer occupied by some of the negroes who cultivated the grounds about them." The



resulting crops could have formed the basis of the purchasing power of Albany slaves.<sup>17</sup> The goods produced and traded reflected the influences of local geography and agricultural conditions. Black customers paid most often with Indian corn, then occasionally with dried apples, dried corn, beans, and potatoes. One woman paid with a pig and later with a hog, another brought in 3 strings of fish. Women were more likely to pay with garden produce than men were, suggesting either that gardens were one of the few means of production that black women had access to, or that black women did more gardening than black men.<sup>18</sup> That is not to say that black men did not garden, or at least use garden produce for trade. In Schenectady, London paid John Bradt with corn and bunches of corn stalks.<sup>19</sup>

Locally grown goods that blacks did not use in exchange also have significance, illustrating the limits of African-American involvement in the local economy. Just as African-Americans in the American South and the Caribbean were

---

<sup>17</sup> Anne Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of Manners and Scenes in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, rep. 1972, orig. 1901), I:78; Albany Common Council Minutes, sale of meat regulated 1792 and 1795, on micro-film 88-02947, #66, 95, Albany Hall of Records, Albany, NY.

<sup>18</sup> Or both.

<sup>19</sup> Account of London, Sept. 27, 1770, John Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1762-, NYSL.

generally restricted from growing the staple crops of the region for exchange, New York blacks did not exchange wheat for goods. Nor did Sanders' black customers trade in beef, although pigs were in evidence.

Men had only a few more options for payment than did women. One man paid in white pine. White pine was also used to pay off part of a woman's account, though she did have a husband who possibly was free, and therefore perhaps the source of the white pine. In general however, it can not be said that gender clearly defined one's payment choices. Both men and women exchanged small quantities of furs. Jack paid for a blanket with 10 raccoon skins. A woman brought in musquash (muskrat) in payment. Catching muskrat or raccoon could be done without roaming very far afield.

Clearly slaves used general skills, adapting them to broader economic purposes. In the environment of frontier New York, most men had the skills to harvest white pine and saw the wood into boards. Whether black men had free access to white pine is questionable, but historian A. J. Myers-Williams speculates that slaves regularly worked in sawmills and other places of industry. The white pine may have originated in that labor or some other exchange of work for pay.

On another occasion, Lane, a black woman and slave of

Barent Sanders the father of Robert, brought in 40 empty glass bottles for trade payment. There is no evidence of how she accumulated these bottles. Most of her purchases of liquor from Sanders were for gallons of rum, too much for the common quart-size green bottles of the eighteenth-century, which presumably these 40 bottles were.

Most commonly, blacks paid for goods in cash. Payment in cash became more common for all consumers during the 1750s and 1760s, for slaves as well as owners. John Sanders' own slaves paid him partly in cash for goods they purchased from him. In 63 entries for credit in Elizabeth Sanders book, 37 represented payment in cash. Even though these black people were slaves, opportunities existed in their working lives for earning cash. Walter Butler paid a Negro for a burial. John Sanders paid another Negro for ginseng gathered. The control over cash earned in these extra jobs enabled African-Americans in Albany to obtain some measure of small luxuries.<sup>23</sup>

Although Elizabeth Sanders sold goods to slaves she did not give them the same kind of access to credit that she did for her white customers. The accounts of her black customers did not drag on unpaid for years. Many white and

---

<sup>23</sup> Walter Butler Account Book, 1733-1743, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL; Sanders-Glen Account Book. Slaves in the nineteenth-century south also used cash for payments to their masters and to local merchants.

a few black accounts never were closed but generally slaves paid off their debts quickly. Doing so sometimes required ingenuity and a juggling of assets between black family members.

Black families functioned as economic units even though the members may not have lived as a nuclear family. Typically, in the north, marriages between black men and women did not include co-residence. Northern blacks maintained marriages and parent-child relationships despite the fact that the parties involved often did not live together. The small numbers of slaves owned by individual whites meant that blacks only rarely lived in nuclear families and faced serious difficulties in maintaining family ties between households.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Sanders' accounts document the expression of those ties through economic links between individuals, links that may also have

---

<sup>22</sup>The wives of traders and "batto-men" also took part in marriages that did not rely on steady co-habitation. The wives of men who made frequent and extended journeys not only were left alone for long periods of time but generally had to support themselves until their husbands returned. Ira Berlin in "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society," AHR 85(1980)44-78, discusses demographic variations across the colonies; Piersen, Black Yankees, 94; Graham Russell Hodges notes the particular challenges faced by northern blacks on small farms in Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865 (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997), 16-19; For a discussion of how black mariners and their families adjusted to separation see W. Jeffrey Bolster, Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), ch. 6.

served to strengthen family bonds. We may not be able to speak of black households as little economies the way we speak of white households but we can certainly see that in important ways, Albany African-American family members connected to each other through a family economy if not a household economy.

Elizabeth Sanders took care to note exactly who paid what or bought what, leaving behind a useful, albeit scanty, record of the relationships between some Albany blacks. Cate, for instance had a husband named Jan who both borrowed money on Cate's account and made payments to it. Mink's wife Sarah made several purchases while Mink's father borrowed cash, putting it on Mink's account. Lane's husband, John Burn, actually had a last name suggesting that he was a free black. The accounts of Tom, owned by Killian Van Rensselaer, contained no references to other family members. Elizabeth Sanders' own slave Tom, however, had a partner with whom he jointly owned a horse. Black family relationships depended in part on the extension of economic ties beyond the bounds of a single household. If white families derived their power from the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the father or parents, black families created strength from the distribution of whatever assets they had.

Some comparable support between white family members

also appears in the records, such as David Springer "accepting to pay for acco[un]t of your Sister Abigail" or Nenne Brown taking responsibility for the debts of her sister Wyntjie Bath. Both blacks and whites used economic means to express their family connections.

In Elizabeth Sanders' accounting of black marriages, the husband does not always emerge as the dominant figure. The key to which partner had more economic substance rested on their acquaintance with the merchant or retailer. Elizabeth Sanders did not label Cate's account with the name of her husband, Jan, in part because she likely knew Cate better and saw her more frequently. Cate was ultimately responsible for the purchases made against her account, even as Mink was responsible for the purchases made on his account by his wife, Sarah. Sarah likewise felt responsible for their joint purchases. She brought in cash payments on more than one occasion.

The difference between these accounts and the accounts of white couples is that even when Sanders listed accounts in the names of white women, their husbands did not use the accounts for purchases. White women made payments on their husbands' accounts and made purchases debited from their husbands' accounts but white men did not similarly make purchases under their wives' names. On the one occasion when a man did make a payment on his wife's debt, her name

appears over the debt while his is written over the credit. The entries of whites contain evidence of the separate interests of husband and wife. The economic concerns of black family members entwined in partnerships not seen in white marriages.

These economic ties in black families extended beyond husbands and wives to other generations. Lane, for instance, provided two gallons of rum when her son got married. The gift of rum by a mother on the day of her son's wedding suggests Lane's celebration of her son's happiness, declared through a simple purchase. Mink and his father had a more complex economic relationship. On more than one occasion, Mink's father borrowed cash against Mink's account. Mink's father, however, also paid off part of Mink's account in pine boards which Mrs. Sanders noted "must be Deducted out fathers Boards of 1755." In 1757, Mink paid off £ 1.16.0, "By Debiting yr father for the Ballance Due to him in Book A." These accounts show a family balancing their purchases precariously by moving resources around between family members as needed.

The balance of power in black families may not have relied as heavily on the centralized and overt authority of the husband as white families did. In no way do the records of a few transactions tell the entire story of family finances but they do tell part of the story. Surely there

is much more to tell about the independent economies of black slave families.

Studies of the internal economy of slaves have concentrated on the important questions of slave interaction with a white economy. Historian John Schlotterbeck sees the internal economy of slaves as developing from established privileges such as garden plots and free time, which provided the goods that fueled informal exchanges between owners and slaves.-- The goal of the informal exchange goes back to the black family economy with family members using scarce resources to benefit and strengthen a family.

The widespread exchange system that slaves developed in early nineteenth century Virginia, included numerous levels of social interaction, between slaves, between slave and master, between slave and poor white, between slave and storekeeper, between slave and peddler. Slaves used goods grown or made to purchase various consumer goods, and in the process test the limits of slavery. More profoundly, however, they used these exchanges to maintain their

---

-- John Schlotterbeck, "Internal Economy of Slavery in Rural Piedmont Virginia," in The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas ed. by Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1991) 171, 173. Even the use of cash does not create an exchange between equals. The exchange system of any society tends much more to support the society, and much less to undermine it.



families and elaborate on their family economies.<sup>23</sup>

In her memoirs of her childhood in eighteenth-century Albany, Anne Grant viewed the subject of slavery through a rosy mist of nostalgia. While conceding that slavery was not a good institution, Grant went on to discuss the happy slaves of Albany and how much a part of the white families the slaves were. The owners, she said, were much attached to their slaves, always giving the young slave children to a member of the family when the slaves reached the age of three. In the eyes of Grant, keeping the young slaves in the family was a kindness to both slave parent and child. In her memory, the new young owner "to whom the slave was given immediately presented it with some piece of money and a pair of shoes."<sup>24</sup>

Grant did not discuss the importance of the shoes or the money, but these items can be viewed both functionally and symbolically. Functionally, the shoes were shoes but symbolically, they served as a reminder of the responsibility of the owner to maintain his or her slave. Besides serving a reward to the slave, the gift of a coin

---

<sup>23</sup> Shane White suggests that most of the purchasing done by blacks in New York City at the turn of the century took place in the streets, either from independent sellers or in markets. Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810, (New York: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 195-196.

<sup>24</sup> Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, I: 80, 81.

implies a recognition that the slave had his or her own interest in possessing cash, an acknowledgment by the slaveholder that a slave might still like to buy goods or accumulate assets.

The conditions of slavery contributed to shaping, although not defining, the consumer goods most frequently purchased by Albany-area blacks. Slave owners followed some general rules regarding the treatment of their slaves. The Court minutes show occasional records of owners being chastised for the ill-treatment of slaves. Not, that is, for physically abusing the slaves, but for failing to provide the necessities of life. The Albany County Court on "being informed that a Negro Wench belonging to the Heirs of Hendrick Hallenbeck, dec'd is going about the streets naked and without any Sustenance whatever" ordered the Heirs to "keep the said Wench & maintain her sufficiently for a servant."<sup>25</sup>

Slaveholders then were held to minimum standards for supplying basic needs. Shoes apparently were part of what was expected from an owner. The account books regularly record the purchase of shoes by owners for their slaves. A shoemaker's accounts indicate the regular purchase of shoes for slave dependents. Owners also provided some clothing.

---

<sup>25</sup> Albany County Court Minutes, October 5, 1768, on microfilm, Albany Hall of Records.

John Butler's accounts contained a long list of items bought by "Capt Walter Butler for the Negroes," such as "a shift and pty cot shoss and stockns" (shift and petticoat, shoes and stockings) for Jen.<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that Albany blacks did not buy shoes or clothes, quite the contrary, but their purchases did not represent life's barest necessities. Instead they bought small luxuries or embellishments.

Mrs. Sanders' black customers bought items very similar to those purchased by whites. Blacks bought a variety of fabrics, thread, hanks of silk, buttons, tea, rum, and a number of caps and hats. Less common purchases included handkerchiefs, buckles, stockings, shoes, a rug, a blanket, shot and an iron trap. While black customers chose items from the same categories as Mrs. Sanders' white customers, a close analysis of purchasing patterns reveals differences not only between whites and blacks but between black men and women.

These differences extend beyond what was actually purchased to the ways that the various customers shopped. Eighteen black customers made 100 trips to Mrs. Sanders' store while 87 white customers made 230 trips. For black customers that means an average of 5.6 trips per account

---

<sup>26</sup> Unidentified Account Book of a Shoemaker, 1733-1774, (in Dutch), Jacob Lansing Family Papers, NYSL; John Butler Account Book.

holder, while white customers averaged just 2.6 trips per customer. (Or 5.9 vs 4.3 if you count as customers only those people who actually made purchases as opposed to all the names in the book.) Those blacks who did shop with Mrs. Sanders were more consistent customers than the whites, buying from her over a longer period of time. Perhaps the limited choice that unfree African-Americans had in where they shopped ensured their loyalty to Sanders.

Table 3.

PURCHASES OF SELECTED ITEMS IN E. SANDERS' ACCOUNTS

	Tea	Rum	Sugar	Cash
Black Customers (n=18)	19 (24 $\frac{2}{3}$ )	38 (74.5)	12 (60)	10 (62.5)
White Customers (n=87)	60 (76 $\frac{2}{3}$ )	13 (25.5)	8 (40)	6 (37.5)
Total	79	51	20	16

Four basic items of consumption illustrate the variation in purchasing patterns for Mrs. Sanders' white and black customers. These percentages are even more significant because the number of black customers is many fewer than that of white customers. The reasons for these differing patterns of consumption can not be strictly

consigned to cultural differences between the groups either. Blacks may have bought more rum from Sanders because they had nowhere else to buy it. Whites on the other hand, especially white men, likely had access to several nearby dram shops and taverns. Loudoun's List of 1756 contains the names of 9 or so such establishments, as well as a large number of retailers from whom rum could be purchased. More than one of Mrs. Sanders' white customers operated establishments that sold liquor.<sup>27</sup>

Among the black customers however we also see a gendered division in the choices made by the purchasers. Of the 19 purchases of tea, 15 were made by black women. (Two of these women also bought tea kettles.) Tea, which drew many white customers into Sanders' shop, and in England supported an entire complex of stores, held much less allure for Albany's blacks. For those who bought rum, 32 of 38 purchases were made by women. We can not assume that women of color necessarily drank more than men, but we can perhaps surmise that black women had an even more restricted set of places to buy rum than the black men did. Some of the rum was used for celebrations and ceremonies involving groups of people, and was not purchased to drink alone. Mrs. Sanders

---

<sup>27</sup> Lord Loudoun's List, 1756, photocopy, Colonial Albany Project (original at Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA).

noted that one purchase of rum was for "when yr son Marryd." Women also bought sugar more often than men did, perhaps because they did more cooking than men, or perhaps the sugar was used with the rum. While the numbers of people borrowing cash was quite small, it is perhaps important that here we see black men borrowing cash more often than women.

The consumer merchandise most often purchased by Sanders' black customers was fabric. For Albany blacks, the purchase of fabric meant new clothing. In the eighteenth century, clothing conveyed status more clearly than any other category of consumer goods. What people wore mattered as much in creating an impression of social position as who they were. It did not matter much if one had wealth, if no one could tell at a glance. Historian Shane White has discussed the importance of dress to New York City blacks in the era of the Revolution. Albany blacks, especially those of higher status, were no less interested in their dress.<sup>24</sup>

Advertisements for runaways have proven important in discussion about slave clothing. The dress of blacks during the colonial and early Federal period has been noted for its retention of African characteristics. The articles of

---

<sup>24</sup> White, Somewhat More Independent, 196-197; Lydia Jean Wares, "Dress of the African-American Woman in Slavery and Freedom: 1500-1935," (unpub. PhD. dissertation, Purdue University, 1981), 134; Linda Baumgarten, "Plains, Plaids, and Cotton: Woolens for Slave Clothing," Ars Textrina 15(1991): 203-222, 203.

clothing worn by blacks in the North were the same as those worn by whites, but "the overall effect was distinctive," as blacks pieced together outfits that defied the dress conventions of white northerners. Black consumers, even consumers privileged to buy new material, could not depend on the fabric itself to make the same kind of statement that well-dressed whites made.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the fabric bought by black customers was not described as decorated, or even colored. To a much greater extent than the white customers, Albany blacks bought plain fabrics. Overall, 65% of fabric purchases by blacks were of plain fabric, while just over 45% of the purchases by white customers were. In general, fabrics with patterns or colors cost more than plain, and some patterns or colors cost more than others. Black customers also made use of alternative types of purchases, such as second-hand clothing. By and large, however, blacks in Albany, like blacks in the South, relied on the clothing provided by the slaveholder, clothing that likely would not have been pretty. New striped or colored fabric constituted a real luxury.<sup>30</sup>

People have perhaps always used dress to accentuate

---

<sup>29</sup> Quotation from White, Somewhat More Independent, 196; Linda Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People': Slave Clothing in Early Virginia," Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts 12(1988): 26-70, 59; Piersen, Black Yankees, 101.

<sup>30</sup> Baumgarten, "Clothes for the People," 50-52.

authority and social position. When Mink bought black cloth, shalloon for lining and two dozen buttons, he purchased the materials for an impressive suit. Likewise when London bought a pair "Pomps" and silver buckles, he certainly planned to make a social statement, perhaps especially to other blacks in Schenectady.<sup>31</sup> These African-Americans adopted the symbols of the local white society to reinforce their own position. What we can not tell from these purchases is precisely how these items were used. Small differences in the cut of a suit or the placing of buttons could have spoken volumes to the wearer. Adapting common items in an uncommon way formed the heart of black style in Federal period New York.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> ESS Accounts; London's Account, John Bradt Accounts; Some of the possible explanations for the high numbers of buttons on slave sites include the use of buttons in medicine bundles or for magical purposes, for musical instruments, or buttons may have been discarded as slaves collected fabric for quilts. Patricia A. Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 87-114, 109, 111. Baumgarten thinks the buttons may have been used as beads, "Slave Clothing", 59.

<sup>32</sup> White, Somewhat More Independent, 196-197, Piersen, Black Yankees, 101.



Table 4.

## FABRIC TYPES PURCHASED BY E. SANDERS' CUSTOMERS

Type	White		Black	
	M(25)	W(29)	M(7)	W(11)
Plain	11	38	24	17
Check	5	8	2	2
Striped	3	4	1	3
Black	3	10	4	2
Blue	3	4	2	2
Green	1	4	-	2
White	1	3	-	3
Purple	-	3	1	-
Fine	-	6	-	-
Spotted	-	1	-	-
Stamp	1	-	-	-
Total	28	81	34	30

These categories describe the look of the cloth, and not the fabric type. "Plain" means undescribed beyond the type of fabric.

One area of consumption where we see contrasting patterns affected by both race and gender is the purchasing of fabric. Black customers of both sexes made more purchases per person than did the white customers. The availability of other places to shop could have determined this proportion. However, we should also consider the possibility that faced with a widening array of consumer choices, her black customers still chose to spend their time and money on clothing rather than on other goods. Black men made more purchases of fabric per customer than black women

while white men made substantially fewer purchases than white women. This is startling only because we assume that women are more interested in clothing and fabrics than men. It is entirely possible that men bought fabric for women who had no opportunity on their own for purchasing such material.

One clothing choice often discussed in relation to African and African-American consumers is that of headgear. The evidence from the purchases at Sanders' indicate a number of black purchases of hats and handkerchiefs, more proportionally than white customers. When Tom bought a "Bever hat," or Brit bought a "4 Ells hat Band Crape and 1 Castor hat," they each certainly intended to make a fashion statement. White women bought quite a lot of lawn and cambric in small quantities, perhaps for caps. Black women rarely made similar purchases. The small white cap commonly associated with colonial dress perhaps was not chosen by black consumers, who preferred instead to wear a felt hat or to use a new silk handkerchief.<sup>33</sup>

The four slaves that bought goods most regularly from Elizabeth Sanders belonged to very prominent families, specifically the Van Rensselaers, the Schuylers, and the Sanderses. The goods bought by Barent Sanders' bondspeople,

---

<sup>33</sup> See Baumgarten, "Clothes for the People," 59, for mention of handkerchiefs used as headgear by slaves.

Cate and Lane, by Peter Schuyler's bondsman, Mink and by Killiaen Van Rensselaer's servant, Tom, reflect the goods bought by slaves of comparative privilege and status. Slaves of lesser position might have spent most of their spare money buying food and improving their diets, as slaves in other areas did, but these four slaves spent their money on clothing and imported grocery items. Lane bought "flower" in 1755 and one half of a cheese in 1757, but these were the only food items listed in the accounts of these four consumers.

Lane visited Sanders' house consistently over the course of ten years, averaging about 2.5 visits a year. Mink and his wife, Sarah, between them made 15 stops over the same ten years. Cate went to Elizabeth Sanders' 21 times in ten years, but nine of those calls came in one year, 1755. From 1759 through 1761, Cate never made a purchase from Sanders. Mink and Lane each apparently went for a year at a time without making the journey to the Sanders' house, at least for the purpose of purchasing goods. The purchases by blacks declined somewhat during the years of the Seven Years' War perhaps reflecting the turmoil in the city during those years.

Much of what Lane, Cate, Mink and Tom bought consisted of articles of dress or recreation.<sup>34</sup> Tom for instance

---

bought the materials for a complete, or nearly complete, suit of clothes not once but twice. These purchases however, occurred seven years apart. In October of 1756, Tom bought cloth, shalloon for lining, buckram to reinforce the coat, silk, thread, mohair, and 2 1/2 dozen buttons. After a lapse of six years, Tom bought tea and borrowed cash, then returned for rum. In June of 1763, he bought stockings, a large amount of fustian fabric, shalloon, buckram, linen, thread, 2 dozen buttons, and 1 shilling cash. Tempering the interest of Albany blacks in clothes was the high cost of material. Tom might have preferred not to wait seven years for new clothes of his choosing, but likely had no choice.

The status of these black servants meant attention to both the quality of the fabric and the details of dress. Cate's position may have been especially high among local blacks. She was one of very few blacks who witnessed the baptism of a child in the Dutch Church of Albany, standing up at the baptism of the small daughter of a male slave. Cate's age is uncertain but she was married herself and had her own account. She and Mink's wife, Sarah each purchased large quantities of black crepe and black bombazine, which may have had associations with mourning even in the

---

<sup>34</sup> Berlin and Morgan, Slaves' Economy, 3.

eighteenth-century, but certainly conveyed dignity. In a further statement of her position Cate may have worn a cap, kerchief or decorative apron of lawn. She was one of only three black woman who bought a small quantity of this expensive linen.

In the 1750s, Lane had a son of marriageable age and therefore she was not very young. Lane, or her husband John Burn, cared enough about their appearance to pay a tailor for his work. Elizabeth Sanders twice paid Jellis Winne 5 shillings cash for Lane, once specifically for "making the Coat." We can assume that since Lane bought green ratteen on two occasions that she liked the way she looked in green, and that clothing in this fabric supported her in her social position. The materials she chose, green and later red, ratteen, and perhaps the way that she wore it, differed considerably from Cate's black crepe.<sup>35</sup>

The efforts that blacks in early America made to adapt English consumer goods to their own designs is a material expression of what W. E. B. DuBois later understood as the

---

<sup>35</sup> Ratteen was a "thick, twilled, woolen cloth, usually friezed or with a curled nap"; Bombazine (bombasine) is defined as "a twilled dress-material composed of silk and worsted, cotton and worsted, or worsted alone. In black much used for mourning." Crepe (crepe), in the eighteenth century was "a sort of thin worsted stuff", and later a "transparent gauze like fabric, chiefly of black silk and used for mourning dress." All definitions taken from the Oxford Universal Dictionary prepared by William Little et al. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1955).

"twoness" of African-American life. The pull of black interests, whether that was the influence of Africa, or of the West Indian adaptations of African culture, or even just the desire of a slave to control one part of his or her life, met up with the need to use materials both locally available and affordable. Clothing and identity joined together for blacks as well as whites. Many black consumer purchases related directly to dress and thus self-expression. When black family members supported each other in their commercial transactions, they supported each other in the expression of their individuality, in opposition to a faceless slavery.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that area blacks bought things in Sanders' store in relative formality is not to deny the possibility of an even more active role in local informal economies. What makes an exchange formal as opposed to informal? Clearly, those exchanges that appear in account books must be counted as formal. The setting perhaps also determines whether an exchange is formal. An exchange in a store with the customer and retailer filling their prescribed roles

---

<sup>36</sup> For "twoness," see W.E. Burghardt Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1961, orig. 1903), 17; Increasing percentages of Africans in the population may have contributed to this distinctive style also. See Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 251-288.

qualifies more surely as formal than does an exchange that takes place on a path in the woods. An exchange in a store ritualizes the behavior of the participants and reinforces the existing social status of the participants. An exchange in a barnyard was less formalized but does not negate the relative positions of the people involved.<sup>37</sup>

Informal economies include interchanges between women in their kitchens and dooryards, the unrecorded exchanges between farmers, or the undocumented activities of slaves in a local market. Much of slave commerce took place in settings where no records were kept. The lack of records does not mean that no complexity existed. In lowcountry Georgia and in the Caribbean, slaves carried on a multitude of economic relationships. Even though denied any significant legal autonomy, they worked to expand the economic limits imposed on them by slavery in just such as informal economy. Recent studies of slavery in the Caribbean have examined the role of black women in the marketplaces, pointing out their prominence in this arena.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> For examples of how social exchanges reinforce the comparative status of the people involved, see Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 336-344.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance, Michael Mullin, Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), ch. 4.

Marketplaces are often mentioned as important to local black communities, enabling slaves and free blacks to operate as entrepreneurs. In Barbados, slave women depended on access to their own fields and the time to cultivate crops for sale. They then translated their produce into cash, and a better diet. Some of these market women were able to save enough money to buy their own freedom and perhaps that of family members as well.<sup>39</sup>

The function of markets to slave and free blacks in Albany and Schenectady is by no means clear. Albany had a meat market at least by the end of the eighteenth century, Schenectady perhaps did not. In the years after the American Revolution, local governments regulated the meat markets strictly, specifically banning slaves from selling meat. Penalties included fines to the master and jail time for the slave caught breaking the rules. Peter Kalm noted in 1750 that a market in Albany met twice weekly and that the country people brought their goods there to sell. Participation by local African-Americans might be expected in this venue but no good evidence has been found for weekly or seasonal markets.

Subtle patterns in the seasonal purchasing patterns by Albany African-Americans suggest that fairs, if not markets,

---

<sup>39</sup> Beckles, Natural Rebels, 45.



may have taken place. Small differences exist between the buying patterns of whites and blacks. White women visited at a steady rate over ten months of the year, with the notable and not surprising exception of February and March when little shopping occurred. White men also made purchases throughout the year with a drop in January and February. Little existed in the way of a pattern for black men although they too did less buying in January, February and March. Black women, on the other hand made many more purchases in July, December, and January. Collectively, we see three small buying clusters for African-American consumers. <sup>40</sup>

The clusters in buying correlate loosely to the occurrence of fairs. Fairs may have been held occasionally since their existence was legislated for twice a year in the early part of the century. The account book of William Kane mentions the cost to a customer for a cow "bought at the fair," in January but no other references occurred in the sources. These fairs originally were to be held during the third week of July in Albany and the third week of October

---

<sup>40</sup> A fair is a periodical gathering, defined as to time and place by statute or custom. Markets generally were (are) open more regularly; "An Act for Settling Fairs and Markets," Acts of the Assembly Passed in the Province of New York From 1619 to 1718 (London, 1719), 13, American Colonial Records, Micro-film Reel 1, Dimond Library, UNH; William Kane Day Book, Jan. 4, 1771, Albany, NYSL.

in Crawlius (Crolius?) in Rensselaerwyck. A twice yearly fair served as a great attraction for all local residents. The debit made to a customer in January by William Kane suggests that perhaps a fair was held, not in October, but around the end (or beginning) of the year.

Historians have discussed the adoption by blacks of the Dutch Pentecost Festival, otherwise known as Pinkster. Pentecost falls seven Sundays after Easter which places it from mid-May to early June. Purchases of fabric and rum by African-Americans do not suggest any sort of buying binge in relation to Pinkster. Purchases clustered in July and then again in October with another cluster in December and January. The dates of the fairs as spelled out in the early legislation were set at early July and early October. As evidenced by the purchasing patterns, the twice yearly fairs may have been important to the local black population, in a way that Pinkster was not yet. Election Day, important to blacks in New England, perhaps did not have the same relevance to Albany-area African-Americans. Albany's election day at the end of September, does not exactly coincide with active purchasing by blacks, but preceded the October purchases by slaves. Albany and Schenectady blacks may have developed holidays of regional importance to them, without necessarily following patterns established

elsewhere.<sup>42</sup>

In the year or so after the death of Elizabeth Sanders, her husband made an effort to keep the doors open for black consumers. The last few entries made to the accounts reflect his own increasingly ill health as his handwriting deteriorated to an unrecognizable scrawl. Robert Sanders' own death within two years of his wife, marked the end of this opportunity for Cate, Lane, Mink, and Tom and the other slaves who had continued to buy at the Sanders' house. I do not know to where they turned for new consumer goods but the later accounts of the stores and shops of Albany show no trace of the traffic of black consumers, so it seems likely that the de facto segregation of the economy continued.<sup>43</sup>

As Lane collected her purchases of thread, flannel, and rum on the 18th of September in 1754, she gathered up also the strands of race, gender, and the power to purchase, in an economy shaped around the interests of white male traders. This cultural skein contained the threads of

---

<sup>42</sup>For Pinkster, see, for example, A.J. Williams-Myers, "Pinkster Carnival: Africanisms in the Hudson River Valley," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History 9(1985): 7-17; Hodges, Slavery and Freedom, 56-58; Shane White, "'It Was a Proud Day': African-Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834," JAH 81(1994): 13-50.

<sup>43</sup> I would not even have recognized the handwriting of Robert Sanders in these last entries, were it not for his letterbook where, during an earlier illness, his handwriting also showed a similar deterioration.

individual choice shaped by a knot that at once restrained and gave definition to the skein. The purchases of blacks generated personal expression, even though handicapped by the limits placed on where and how those goods could be purchased.

### Chapter 3.

#### 'By Cash and Work':

#### The Give and Take of Making Payment in Frontier New York

Elizabeth Sanders' principal economic duties revolved around her own household, as did the duties of other women, in New York and elsewhere. Studies of colonial women stress their engagement with the functioning of their households. Very often the engagement of women with the male dominated economy has been noted but not explored. However, Sanders' accounts reveal that she carried on interactions with many people that can be described as primarily economic in spirit, and that fell outside of her domestic duties. Her status as the wife of a wealthy and powerful man, as well as her own family connections, certainly affected these relationships. Nevertheless, the sale of items to such disparate customers as Mink, a slave, and Mr. Richard Cartwright, an innkeeper, can not easily be categorized as domestic. The mere fact that women took part in an activity is not enough to render it domestic and it is time to discuss some of women's activities in non-domestic terms. Less exceptional women of lower status than Sanders' also

took part in relationships that, although tempered by their social and domestic status, were dominated by an economic interest based outside of the household.<sup>2</sup>

In 1763, Mary Wendell of Schenectady paid for items purchased from a local merchant "by cash and work."<sup>3</sup> This chapter explores the relationship of local white women to merchants by looking at the resources used by women to pay for goods and the extent to which women controlled both the nature and the products of their work. Eighteenth-century merchants had a long history of using the work of women to suit their retailing and wholesaling needs. Maintaining a commercial relationship with a merchant or trader gave women greater access to consumer goods. Cash became increasingly important in the regional economy, coming to dominate women's transactions with local merchants, and indirectly to shape the work exchanged for goods. Women organized their work in New York, not by following a single trajectory of progress or decline, but by responding in the short term to the immediacy of particular events and trends, such as war and the war-time economy.

---

<sup>2</sup> Mary Beth Norton, for instance, notes that women took part "on a small scale in the market economy," but does not explore the nature of this participation. Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Unidentified Account Book, Schenectady, 1761-1768, Daniel Campbell Papers, NYSL.

Some historians of women have assumed that women's work changed little during the pre-Revolutionary years of the eighteenth-century.<sup>3</sup> The evidence of the New York account books suggest otherwise. Even though women's work in Albany and Schenectady remained centered in the household, modifications to the female labor associated with outside commerce occurred. In the Hudson-Mohawk area of New York, women did their work in a distinctive regional framework, one that required (or perhaps allowed) women to adjust their work to suit the economic mood of the moment. It would be a mistake to view these changes as progress or decline. As with many developments in the history of women, changes in work patterns often contained elements of both, greater opportunity in one arena often being tempered by diminished opportunities in another. In frontier New York, increased access to consumer goods came hand in hand with restrictions on the work that merchants would take in trade.

Regional forces shaped the interchange between women and local markets. In Pennsylvania, the demand for butter and the structure of households encouraged women to spend

---

<sup>3</sup> Norton, Liberty's Daughters, xx, ch.1; Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), ch.1, esp. p. 11-12; For more information on household manufactures in general, see Rolla Milton Tryon, Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860 (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1966 [reprinted from 1917 edition]).

considerable energy making butter and marketing it. In New York, women made products for local merchants that varied with the times, from the wampum of the early 1750s notable in the accounts of Elizabeth Sanders to the shirts of the early 1760s, as seen especially in the accounts of Samuel Tyms and Daniel Campbell of Schenectady and an unidentified retailer in Albany. Extensive trade and the effects of living on a military frontier combined to form a singular commercial experience for local women. The work of dairies assumed a certain level of wealth and property in the ownership of cows, one that required a husband, or late husband, of substance. Outwork sewing required no property and only the most basic skills. The participation of women in outwork for local merchants was by no means new in the history of women, but widescale outwork sewing was new to this generation of women, in this particular place.

The years between 1740 and 1770 saw a fundamental transformation of the colonial New York economy, primarily related to two causes, in and of themselves connected: the Indian Wars and the increased importance of cash. The lucrative Indian trade (lucrative for some) came apart under pressures from the wars between the British and the French and the subsequent destabilization of established networks of trade. Thousands of troops with cash-in-hand flooded the local system, affecting well-established patterns of



exchange. Vendors increasingly invited the use of cash in transactions, subtly altering the tie between seller and buyer. Earlier trade depended on local contacts, but the introduction of both extensive cash and people from away, in the shape of soldiers, meant that cash increasingly dominated exchanges for men and for women.<sup>4</sup>

Tremors from the economic upheaval of the Seven Years' War pushed women into a new position as producers and consumers. Young single women and married women of all ages increasingly interacted with male retailers because of the demands of war. Gone were the days when widows were the only significant female customers. The demand for products that women could supply more readily than men opened a door into the marketplace for numbers of women as the early 1760s saw the clarification of a system of outwork, with women sewing shirts for local traders. The war and the renegotiation of trading patterns shaped the demand for the shirts and other articles of clothing.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Similar trends occurred in Connecticut, among other places, as many communities became more outward looking during this period. See Bruce H. Mann, Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), and Cornelia Hughes Dayton, Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), ch. 2.

<sup>5</sup> In pre- or proto-industrial economies, outwork forms part of a complete economic package that functions successfully for a particular historical moment. In the Auffay region of

The timing of the development of outwork reveals, significantly, that women engaged in outwork, not during the boom years of the late 1750s, but during the bust years of the early 1760s. None of the account books that I have used show the existence of this outwork outside of the years 1761-1765, and possibly no later than 1764. For instance, the day book of an unidentified Schenectady merchant notes the sale of 103 shirts to Campbell and Andrews in 1759, but contains no record of women sewing for the merchant. The account book of another, also unidentified, Schenectady merchant shows women sewing for credit from 1761-1764. Samuel Tyms' books record that his outwork business took place between 1761 and 1763. The account books of Daniel Campbell that document his lists of women sewing fall

---

France, women's outwork constituted one part of an overall economic strategy for the culture. The outwork of women allowed the men to participate in their "traditional" labors and recreations. In early nineteenth century Massachusetts, the ability of the women to adjust their labor allowed families to adapt to a changing economy without radically changing the way they lived. Gay L. Gullikson, Spinners and Weavers of Auffay: Rural Industry and the Sexual Division of Labor in a French Village, 1750-1850 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Christopher Clark, The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 139-146, 176-177; Thomas Dublin, Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 30, 37-44, 73. Unlike Massachusetts and the Auffay region, outwork in the Albany-Schenectady area sprang from an economy heavily focused on trade and commerce and less on production. Also, unlike Massachusetts, outwork did not lead directly to wage labor and industry.

between 1761 and 1765 (most of the lists are undated). The Albany Retail Merchant's book shows women making shirts in 1761, no activity in his accounts for 1762, a few shirts being made in 1763, and extensive outwork in 1764. The hard times generally associated with these years suggests that the women who sewed did the work because of the poor economic conditions and not perhaps because of any growing independence.<sup>6</sup>

The organization of local outwork sewing records varied from merchant to merchant, perhaps reflecting subtle differences in the ways that merchants accepted the business of women. The accounts of Daniel Campbell contain memorandum lists of women with quantities of material, and the number of shirts expected, scattered in books along with other types of transactions. On the torn first page of an unbound account book kept by Campbell from 1761 to 1765, appears the following entry.<sup>7</sup> "Delivered to Albert Vanslyk's

---

<sup>6</sup> Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), ix, 246.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Campbell Account Book, unbound, 1761-1765, Daniel Campbell Papers, NYSL. According to the figures in Campbell's list, the Van Slyck daughters would have been making very large shirts at about 7 yards of fabric each while most of the shirts appear to have used 3 1/2 yards. The numbers in the manuscript are clear, however, so we can only assume a recording error of some kind on Campbell's part. For more discussion of clothing production and the amounts of cloth required, see Adrienne D. Hood, "The

Daughters...224 yards of Linnen to be made into 33 shirts."

This undated memorandum continues with a list.

John Symmons wife	21 yds 6 shirts,	Do 7 14+ p 21/6
Widow Van Slyke	37 yds Check	for 11
Widow Veder	29 yds Do	for 9
Mrs Peck	35 Ells English	for 15
Widow Veder	35 Do	for 15
Elizabeth V.vost	34 yards	for 10
Widow Minissen	35 Do	for 16
Mrs Forrest	35 Ells	for 13
Mrs Peck	25 yards	--

Campbell and these local women clearly participated in an organized system of outwork in which Campbell provided the cloth while the women provided the labor. What we do not get from these memorandum lists is a sense of where he distributed the yardage to the women, at his store or elsewhere. We therefore do not know whether Campbell and the women who sewed for him crossed paths in his store, or if their commercial relationship remained one-dimensional.

The unidentified retail merchant of Albany listed women and the fabric they took, as well as shirts they "brought home," along with his other daily transactions. His records suggest strongly that women came to his store to pick up material and to drop off completed clothing. Samuel Tyms, a merchant from Schenectady scribbled lists of women and material in the end pages of his blot book and his other

---

Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 53(1996):43-66.

account book, but also noted specific interchanges in his daily records. Tyms recorded in his day book on May 22, 1764 that the wife of Mr White had bought calico and "pd part in sewing as (per) sewing book." The implication that Tyms kept a book exclusively to track sewing assignments suggests an extensive use of women and their labor for the merchant's entrepreneurial activity. His business with women extended well beyond casually meeting in his store.<sup>4</sup>

The outwork grew from women's known skill at sewing and developed easily from a tradition of sewing occasionally for pay. In the account book of Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders, she listed women sewing "Indian shirts" and other items, as credit for goods purchased from her. The origins of the shirt outwork system began with the Indian trade, rapidly expanding to fill the demands of an occupying army. As the system developed, the diversity seen in forms of payment by women disappeared until only payment in sewing and cash were accepted by merchants.<sup>5</sup>

William Johnson noted several expenditures to women for

---

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Tyms Day Book, 1762-1768, Schenectady (Blot Book), Campbell Papers; Daniel Campbell Account Book (unbound), Schenectady, New York, and Detroit, 1761-1765, Campbell Papers; The Account Book of Retail Merchant, Albany, 1760-1765, all in NYSL.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Robert Sanders Account Book, Albany, 1753-1764, N-YHS (hereafter ESS Accounts). See for example, the account of Cornelya Dunbar.

making Indian shirts, plain and ruffled, in his accounting of Indian expenses for the years 1755-56. As Johnson recruited Indians to his cause, his expense accounts indicate that very often, he provided guns, shirts, and other articles of clothing.<sup>13</sup> In July of 1756, he listed payment to his factor in New York for items that included "A Box and Cartage 4/9 Containing 241 plain Shirts...46 Ruffled Do," and a second box with 164 additional plain shirts and 31 more ruffled ones. Not all of the shirts that Johnson bought may have been intended for the Indian trade but it seems likely that many of them were. Indeed, Warren Johnson wrote in his journal of 1760-1761 that the Indians "all wear Check Shirts, & some Ruffles of the Same & alsoe Indian Shoes Stockings, & Night Caps-."<sup>14</sup>

While not a major expense in the overall scheme of Johnson's accounts, shirt-making provides an example of women receiving payment for work: work that connected white women to the larger circle of the Indian trade. White women

---

<sup>13</sup> James Sullivan, et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965) [Hereafter Johnson Papers], 2:636, 640; 571, 577; For more on the importance of clothing to both Johnson and the Iroquois, see Timothy J. Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 13-42.

<sup>14</sup> Journal of Warren Johnson, 1760-61, in Johnson Papers 13:191.

supplemented Johnson's usual supply of shirts. In 1749, when Robert Sanders listed purchases and payments made on behalf of William Johnson, he included payment to "Rebecca Fonda for making 2 Shirts with Ruffels & 2 without them together...[3 shillings]." We do not know who Johnson paid in 1756 for making "257 Coarse Indian Shirts @ 6d, Do 21 fine..Do 2/," but we do know that he paid Elizabeth Potman "for makg 24 Coarse and 5 fine Indn Shirts." It was not just Johnson who paid women for shirts for the Indian trade. Johannes Harmanus Wendell gave credit to Lena Wendell, daughter of Anna for "Maake van Wilde Hemde."<sup>12</sup>

The books show the continued presence of soldiers and purchases of materials for large numbers of men, but they additionally reveal a re-orientation of the former Indian trade, focusing now on goods for Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego. After the fall of Montreal in 1759, the attention

---

<sup>12</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts, Aug. 21, 1749; Rebecca Fonda, her sister, and her cousin also did occasional sewing for Evert Wendell. Evert Wendell Day Book, Jan. 1729, Albany, 1717-1745, N-YHS; Johnson Papers 2: 629, 633, 639. It seems possible that Johnson was paid twice for some of these shirts by the British government. He charged for shirts purchased and also for shirts given to the Indians, as when he charged for a list of goods given to the Indians who fought with him at Lake George. The list included "88 Shirts some Ruffled 9/." 2:584. Johnson also noted the purchase of loaves of bread from women. While most frequently large purchases of bread were made from men (professional bakers), smaller quantities were sometimes purchased from women; "Making Indian Shirts," Johannes Harmanus Wendell Ledger, 1741-1744 (in Dutch), Schenectady, NYSL.

of the British shifted towards the forts of the Great Lakes making Schenectady more important as a trading and supply center for the west. Schenectady's position just under twenty miles west of Albany and its ready access to the Mohawk River supported a busy trade to the west. Although the town had no wharves, eighteenth-century observer Richard Smith noted, "a Public Landing or two at the end of the streets where the Batteaux bring the wheat and peltry from above," before proceeding with the goods overland by wagon to Albany and the Hudson River. The partnership of Phyn and Ellice enjoyed a brisk business in sending men "up" with goods for trade. Some of these men left behind families, temporarily without the means of support.<sup>13</sup>

The shifting of soldiers away from Albany and Schenectady out to frontier areas meant the presence of thousands of men living in relatively isolated circumstances. The merchants of the Hudson-Mohawk area stepped in to keep them supplied. The Albany merchant sold "62 chk Shirts" and 50 pairs of shoes to "Messr Farrell & Robins at Oswego" in June of 1764. Samuel Tyms' Blot book

---

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Pearson, A History of the Schenectady Patent in the Dutch and English Times (Albany, New York: Joel Munsell, 1883, reprinted by the Schenectady Historical Society, 1982); Richard Smith, A Tour of the Hudson, The Mohawk, The Susquehanna, and the Delaware in 1769 (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1989) 89, 88; Shipping Book of Phyn and Ellice, Schenectady, 1772-1773, Original at New York Historical Society, Miscellaneous micro-film #3.



contained undated memoranda that noted that he sent up "40 Solders Shurts" on one occasion and "100 Solders Shirts 8 Serjts Do 4 Check Do" on another.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of sewing, the difference between the Indian shirts and soldiers' shirts is scarcely noticeable. The skills used in sewing one or the other varied little. The main difference lay in the numbers of shirts needed. The army needed many more shirts than the Indians did, there being more soldiers in the trading area than warriors. A typical shirt of the eighteenth century, was made of linen, wool, or cotton, or some combination thereof. The length of material for the shirt was folded or seamed at the shoulder with sleeves attached at right angles. Gussets, or small inserts of fabric eased the fit under the arms and at the neck, with reinforcement added to the center front opening. Shirts formed a basic garment for all classes, varying principally in fabric, collars, and cuffs.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> June 16, 1764, Albany Retail Merchant; Tyms Day Book.

<sup>15</sup> Francis X. Jennings estimates that 789 Iroquois warriors were available to Conrad Weiser in 1748. Compare that number to the 16,000 troops commanded by General Abercromby at Ticonderoga in 1755. Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), 32, 363; For a description of a shirt, see Clary Croft and Sharon Croft, "Civilian Everyday Clothing of Adult Planters, 1759-1783," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995), 146-147.

In the Hudson-Mohawk area, occasional sewing for an individual became transformed under pressure from the demands of these changed demographic circumstances during the years from 1759 to 1764. In the conflicts of the 1740s, some women had left Albany for the safety of New York City. During the Seven Years' War, the people of Albany felt the security of the added military. Women who stayed during this conflict needed to adjust to the new economy, just as men did. Instead of dealing with merchants and traders as occasional consumers and sometime producers of butter and fowl, women sold their labor to a merchant who sold the product to unknown people. In many account books of the period, except that of Elizabeth Sanders, women took part in less than 10% of transactions. When a merchant conducted an extensive business in sewing outwork, women took part in approximately 20% of the transactions. By the early 1760s, most of the non-cash credits noted for women involved sewing, generally, but not solely, shirts. This process drew women into the cash-based economy and indeed, into a closer relationship with the local merchants.

Table 5.

## WOMEN INVOLVED IN TRANSACTIONS FROM SEVEN BOOKS

Merchant	Year	Total	Women	Percent
R. Sanders	1750	994	57	5.7
M. Van Bergen	1760	259	15	5.8
Unid. Ledger	1761	337	13	3.7
Unid. Day Book	1760	774	54	6.5
S. Tyms	1763	726	142	19.2
ARM	1764	711	141	19.8
Phyn & Ellice	1767-8	1630	88	5.4

Sources: Robert Sanders Accounts, Van Bergen Day Book, Unidentified Schenectady Accounts, Unidentified Schenectady Day Book, Tyms Day Book, Albany Retail Merchant Accounts, Phyn & Ellice Accounts.

Women did not have a large presence in the earlier account books, those dating to before the early 1750s. The few women who appeared in Robert Sanders' records, for instance were almost exclusively widows. These widows brought wheat and Indian corn to pay for merchandise. Only widows carried their own accounts. John Sanders, a wealthy merchant from Schenectady conducted a business with area farmers that depended largely but not entirely on payment in wheat. Very few married women or daughters appear in his records. The women in the accounts of Arendt Bratt and

Johannes Harmanus Wendell were almost exclusively widows. They paid in agricultural produce or cash, carrying on the agricultural work of their husbands. Women constituted a small percentage of the clientele in these early account books. Less than 15 of Johannes Wendell's 365 customers in the early 1740s were women, who paid infrequently in sewing or dairy products.<sup>16</sup>

Other early account books show some credits for payment with butter and fowl. Many of the credits are not specifically linked to women, but some of the entries occur in conjunction with married women making purchases, such as when Mohawk Valley trader Walter Butler recorded purchases and credits to the account of Abraham Quackebos in 1733, "Pr yr wife, yd tape, 1 gallon molasses, D[itt]o Cr[edit] by 3 3/4 butter." On another occasion, in 1737 Butler credited the account of William Bowen, "Cr by yr wife 8# Butter" (Credit by your wife, 8 pounds butter). These entries suggest not only that the butter was brought by the wife without the husband, but that she very likely produced the butter herself. It remains unclear whether, in 1761 when Johannes Apley's wife brought in "2 Dear Scins," to trade

---

<sup>16</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts; John Sanders Ledger, Schenectady, 1749-1783, N-YHS. John Sanders was the brother of Robert; Wendell Ledger; Arendt Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1737-1749, (in Dutch), W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL.

with John Butler, she had prepared them herself, but the possibility exists.<sup>17</sup>

Evidence from the early account books suggests that single women rarely went to a merchant or trader for goods. If they had then they would have appeared making purchases under the accounts of the fathers or brothers, as occurred very rarely. None of the women associated with credits in the earlier account books appear to be single women. This does not mean that single women did not produce butter or share responsibility for keeping fowl, but it does mean that single women had no presence in the earlier account books. We can speculate that single women, and married women, may have bought and paid for goods from other women or peddlers. On one occasion Walter Butler paid "a Podler" for Mrs. Burrows. It may also be that on Catalina Butler's travels, as she delivered things for her husband, John, that she also traded things with other women. Many times he noted in his accounts that someone had recieved "Cash d[eliver]ed by my wife," or "Cash gave you by my wife." Larger numbers of women found themselves in men's stores in the 1760s, which made a change from the 1740s and 1750s, but some of these

---

<sup>17</sup> Walter Butler Account Book, 1733-1743, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL; John Butler Account Book, 1759-1774, Butlersbury, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL.

women may have changed their venue, and not their buying habits.<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, the account book of Mrs. Robert Sanders (1753-1764) shows her trading with a different clientele. Her clientele was roughly 40% women, as she sold goods to forty three different women over the course of ten years. Her customers paid largely in wampum, producing the shell beads in a system that closely resembled the outwork that later produced large quantities of shirts. Yet unlike sewing outwork, Elizabeth Sanders received wampum from a large number of men as well as women.

In 1755, the onset of the Seven Years' War disrupted the manufacture and trade of wampum by both men and women, leaving women to develop alternate sources of exchange. Sewing and weaving filled part of the gap left by the collapse of the wampum market. During the later years of the 1750s, when women bought goods from Elizabeth Sanders, they paid variously with cash, goods, and services, often sewing bags or Indian shirts or using agricultural produce such as butter or pease. This sewing was not systematically distributed or collected. The jobs spanned a number of years and consisted of various articles.

---

<sup>13</sup> Accounts of William Burrows, Walter Butler Accounts; John Butler Accounts, see for instance the accounts of Brent Vroman and Peter Quackenbuss.

Residents of both Albany and Schenectady participated in the network of sewing organized by merchants during the early 1760s. As described in the account books, the organization of the outwork varied somewhat between the two towns, particularly in terms of the women doing the sewing. Who were the women who sewed? Demographically speaking, the women who took on outwork sewing covered a wide range of ages. Women of different ages and classes used outwork to achieve different ends. For some women, outwork clearly made an important economic contribution to the support of their households. For others, outwork may have provided a little extra spending money for luxuries. However, the women who sewed for Albany and Schenectady merchants shared a common need to earn cash or credit from the storeowner.

The account books of Campbell & Andrews contained undated lists of local women, in number, about thirty-five women, some of whom also sewed for Samuel Tyms. We cannot be sure of the absolute numbers of women sewing for Samuel Tyms, since his "sewing book" has evidently not survived. Of the women on the list, five are called widow, either on Campbell and Andrew's lists, or by Samuel Tyms or another retailer.<sup>12</sup> A group of other women on the list appear to

---

<sup>12</sup> The biographical information on the various women was collected in part from the Family History Files at the Schenectady Historical Society, Schenectady, New York. For families without files, I consulted Jonathan Pearson,

have been married with living husbands, while another group appears to have unmarried. Of the thirty-seven names of Schenectady outworkers, 16 were called "Mrs.", some newly married such as Annatie Nickerson Maldrom, wed in 1761. Ten were called Miss or have been otherwise identified as single including Helena Bratt, the half-sister of Catalintje Bratt Butler, and only 20 when she married in 1765. Some of the unmarried women were not particularly young at the time that they were sewing, such as Margarieta Van Slyke, born in 1731 and at least thirty when she was sewing. Four were called widows and for four or five, marital status is unclear.

Many of the women named on the list lived in the central portion of the Schenectady settlement, near the stockaded fort on the banks of the Mohawk River. The approach to Schenectady from Albany led through several miles of "Sandy Pine Barrens" that lay within a few hundred yards of the town. In 1769, the town consisted of a cluster of about 300 structures, but "Few Contiguous buildings." Other women clearly resided in communities located to the west of Schenectady, beyond the meadowland that flanked the town. Some traveled from as far away as Johnstown, a

---

Contributions for the Genealogies of the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Patent and City of Schenectady from 1662-1800 (Albany, New York; J. Munsell, 1873). In a number of cases, I could find no trace of the women listed. In an equally large number of cases, I found several women living at once who had the same name.



journey shortened considerably by using a batteau.<sup>20</sup> We can not say that outwork drew in a majority of women in the Schenectady area, but we can say that it was not an uncommon form of work, employing at least 35 area women over the years.

Several of the women performing outwork sewing came from the Van Slyck family. The Van Slyck men had a long history as Indian traders and translators, intermarrying on more than one occasion with Iroquois women. In the 1750s and 1760s, Albert Van Slyke and Cornelius Van Slyke continued in the family tradition as traders. Albert's career was not always successful. In 1750, he wrote to William Johnson that he hoped to recoup his losses "if my Creditors don't fall too hard upon me. I hear Every thing I had sold in Vandue at low prises and that my wife is turned out doors." Van Slyke, born in 1708, had married Sara van Antwerpen in 1733 and at the time of his letter had four small daughters, born between 1734 and 1747. Small wonder

---

<sup>20</sup> A few of the women or their husbands appear on a 1768 tax list for Schenectady, Florence Christoph, Upstate New York in the 1760s: Tax Lists and Selected Militia Rolls of Old Albany County, 1760-1768 (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1992). Their names appear near the names of Samuel Tyms and Daniel Campbell. For instance, Margaret Van Dyke, Seger van Santvoort, Isaac Truax (the father of Christina) were all in the same portion of the list as Tyms, while Gilbert Tice and Elias Post both appear in the same portion of the list as Daniel Campbell. In the early 1770s, Tyms apparently was a partner of Daniel Campbell, which may explain how his books came to be in the Campbell Papers.

then, that as adults, his daughters found themselves sewing for the local merchants several years later.<sup>21</sup>

Several Van Slyke names appear on the lists besides "Albert Van Slyke's daughters." According to genealogical records, his daughters were named Clara, Angientje, Anatje, and Lena. The sewing lists include the names, Peggy, Margaret, Annatje, Hanaty, Angelene, and Widow. Annatje is called widow once in other records. However, it is not clear whether Peggy is Margaret, whether there is only one Annatje or Annatie or whether sometimes Annatje or Hanaty is Albert's daughter, whether Angelene is Lena, the youngest daughter or whether Widow Van Slyke always means Annatje. It is clear that the Van Slykes did a lot of sewing as an extended family. Indeed, at least one of the married women sewing was also a Van Slyke. Christina Van Slyke born in 1739, married Gilbert Tice just after 1760, bearing her children in 1762 and 1764. She herself did not make very many visits to Tyms' store but she did sew a number of shirts for him in 1763, as well as sewing for other merchants. Her husband, Gilbert Tice faced his own financial challenges as well. In the early 1760s, William Johnson wrote to the creditors of Tice that they should go

---

<sup>21</sup> Johnson Papers, 1:291; Van Slyke Family File, SHS, Clara Van Slyke, Albert's eldest daughter may have married Nicholas White, a trader, but there is no record of the other daughters marrying.

easy on Tice "who resides in this Neighborhood and whom I take to be an honest wellmeaning Man but hitherto not a little unfortunate." At the time, Tice operated a tavern in Johnstown but at various times he also served as one of captains in the Indian Department, spending long periods away.--

Many women, both single and married, contributed to the family income. Perhaps Mrs. McIntire, the wife of William McIntire, a trader, needed to earn money while her husband was away. Like other traders such as Albert Van Slyke and John Lydius of Albany and Fort Edward, he may have left his wife to support herself while he ventured away with his goods.

Not all of the women sewing in Schenectady came from families with obviously troubled financial histories. Their reasons for sewing thus might have been different from those of women with less than successful husbands. Christina Truax, in her late teens at the time she sewed, may have been interested principally in decorating herself with baubles when she bought a necklace and earbobs in 1762. Sewing thus served for a variety of needs for women of different ages.

In both Schenectady and Albany, few of the women sewing

---

-- Johnson Papers, 7:1151; Gilbert Tice Account Book 1771-1774, Johnstown, NYSL.

were identifiably widows. Widows, especially those who inherited property from their husbands, likely devoted much of their working time to keeping that estate intact, or at least functioning. Widows with little property had little option but to support themselves by sewing. Sewing provided an effective means for married women and single women to earn credit with a storekeeper, whereas otherwise they might have had no marketable skill. The account book of the unidentified Albany Retail Merchant contains the name of twenty-three women who took home material to sew into garments in 1764. Of these, only one is clearly identified as a widow. Ten were given the honorific "Mrs.", while nine are called "Miss." Three more received no honorific at all. At least one of the married women who sewed appear to have done so in company with an unmarried daughter. Both Mrs. Van Vranken and a Miss Van Vranken received material and brought back sewn goods. Sewing for money or credit cut across lines of age and marital status.

The large number of single or unmarried women stemmed perhaps from the presence of the many soldiers stationed in or near Albany during this period. The British Army alone sanctioned the presence of nearly 400 women during the late 1750s. These women were not allowed to follow the troops to Ticonderoga and elsewhere, although they were required to make themselves available for nursing, as necessary. They

received the equivalent of 4 pence a day as a per diem. Some of these women may have stayed in Albany, as might others who came to the colonies but were denied support from the British Command.<sup>-3</sup>

Women did not do all of the sewing in Albany and Schenectady. Many of the men involved in the clothing trades of Albany in the mid-century worked as specialists, likely supplying the local population. The men who appear in the account books doing sewing called themselves tailors and sewed mainly coats and trousers. Tailors, however, did not tend to spend their time sewing shirts or "slops." By the early 1760s, the presence of large numbers of soldiers both from England and New England opened new opportunities for clothing makers of Albany and Schenectady. Tailors generally appear to have had their hands full sewing more complicated and substantial pieces of clothing for the soldiers. The otherwise unidentified Retail Merchant of Albany, who listed large numbers of women sewing in his books, also listed tailors making "Big coats." Similarly, Samuel Tyms of Schenectady listed tailors doing specialized

---

<sup>-3</sup> George Coventry, Cash Book, Albany, 1759; George Coventry. Receipt Book, Albany, 1759-1760, NYSL. Coventry was the Assistant Quartermaster in Albany. His accounts show that 398 women received allowances for food. For a discussion of how provincial soldiers viewed Albany and its environs, see Fred Anderson, A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984), 72-74.

sewing. Shirts purchased in large quantities for soldiers provided work for women. In 1763, an unidentified merchant of Schenectady, perhaps Tyms, recorded the sale of 104 shirts to one soldier for his unit. In 1761, the Retail Merchant noted the sale of 179 checked shirts (and 6 pairs of women's shoes) to the sutler for a New Jersey regiment.<sup>14</sup>

The unidentified retail merchant in Albany, unlike his fellows in Schenectady, may have employed men in sewing outwork. Four men are given credit for making shirts with no reference to their wives. In Schenectady, even when a man brought in shirts, an unidentified merchant, perhaps Tyms, wrote, "Cr[edit] By your wife making shirts." In Albany, the Retail Merchant simply noted the credit. While their wives may have made the shirts, the possibility exists that Lambert Cole made the 22 checked shirts that he claimed as credit in the middle of July in 1764, or that Jonathan Brooks sewed 6 check shirts credited against his account in

---

14

Stefan Bielinski, "How a City Worked: Occupations in Colonial Albany," in Nancy Anne McClure Zeller, ed., A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers (Albany, NY: New Netherland Publishing, 1991), pp. 119-136; For a brief discussion of tailors sewing "slops" in a later period, see Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 107-108; Unidentified Account Book, Schenectady, 1761-1768, Daniel Campbell Papers, NYSL; Albany Retail Merchant, Sept. 28, 1761, Oct. 10, 1761, Nov. 8, 1761 (James Chandler Taylor), Aug. 22, 1761 (New Jersey sutlers).

early April. Given the overall state of the economy and the large numbers of tailors in Albany, we should not be surprised that men might sew, as well as women. Perhaps the Brookses sat sewing together, taking turns bringing in the finished products. The merchant designated Mr. Brooks a "Laberour," suggesting that he was otherwise lacking in skills. He may however have been adept at sewing. If their wives for some reason could not or would not come to the merchant, perhaps the men ran the errands.<sup>15</sup>

A closer look at one entry suggests that the industry primarily came from the women of the families. On May 23, 1764, the merchant made two entries regarding the Coles. First he wrote, "Mrs. Cole-Cr[edit], By work don...1.17.9." He then scribbled this out, writing a second entry,

Mr Lambert Cole...Dr	
To 24 Yds Sheeting Linnen @ 3/-	3.12.0
Cr By making 14 Chk Shirts 1/	0.14.0
making 12 pr Legings 1/	0.12.0
making 7 pr Trousers-1/3	0. 8.9
making 2 pr Sheets -1/6	0. 3.0

The total value earned for these items adds up to £ 1.17.9. The entries depict the following scene. Mrs. Cole entered the store, was recognized by the merchant, and perhaps set her completed work down. After entering her name and the

---

<sup>15</sup> For instance, see Tyms Day Book, Sept. 14, 1763 for a credit to the account of Harmanus Peck; Unidentified Schenectady Accounts, Account of Gilbert Tice; Albany Retail Merchant Accounts, July 17, 1764, April 3, 1764.

credits, the merchant then noticed Mr. Cole. Crossing out Mrs. Cole's credit, he recorded a purchase and the credits under the name of Mr. Lambert Cole, going further to include details about the work that he never intended to include for Mrs. Cole. The merchant's accounting suggests both the extent and limits of Mrs. Cole's economic authority. The credits belonged to her, unless her husband wanted to use them. His presence usurped her position in the exchange.

Two other men, Thomas Shipboy and Robert Henry, did not have wives or relatives in the book. Mr. Shipboy, in fact, was a merchant, so the shirts he brought may have had a different history altogether, as perhaps did the 30 small green buttons he used for credit another day. Shirts served as a currency of sorts even between merchants.<sup>26</sup>

As in Schenectady, some of the women in Albany who sewed came from families with less than successful financial histories. Jonathan Brooks, Mrs. Brooks, and Phebe Brooks all show up in pages of the account book of the unidentified retail merchant. Jonathan and Phebe brought in shirts while Mrs. Brooks did washing. The Brookses lived "down by the water," not the best address in Albany. The family changed churches more than once while living in Albany, a sign of instability, and perhaps indicative of less than stable

---

<sup>26</sup> Albany Retail Merchant Accounts, April 14 and 16, 1764..



finances as well. Sarah Hilton, a relatively constant outworker, and married with at least one small child in 1764, also changed churches over the years. For the Hiltons also, this sign that the family did not conform to the religious conventions of Albany society correlates to their overall status.<sup>-</sup>

Polly Maclean may have been sewing from an immediate financial need. It is by no means certain that she was related to Donald Maclean who also surfaces in the accounts, but they did share a last name. On January 18, 1764, the Retail Merchant wrote that "Mr Donald McClean schoolmastr at Nuscatow" came in and bought an almanac. By the beginning of March, "Donald Miclean Late schoolmaster" is paying his debt with "8 histoorial books..1 Coat..1 Trunk...Cash." If Miss Polly Maclean was his daughter, it might explain why she did so much sewing. Her sewing, incidentally, was more skilled than that of the other women, as might befit the daughter of a schoolmaster. In January, 1764, she "Took out 10 yds check to make a Civer for Bed." Later that year, the Retail Merchant noted, "I have 7 dresden work Ruffled shirts at Miss Polly McCleans to be altered in the collers and hands." In all likelihood, many of the women sewing lacked

---

<sup>-</sup> The information on people residing in Albany came from the Colonial Albany Social History Project, run by Stefan Bielinski. The CAP has compiled information on thousands of people who lived in Albany prior to 1800.

the skills necessary for any kind of fancy work or tailoring, relying on the most basic techniques of sewing.<sup>23</sup>

If the Albany Retail merchant recorded his entire outwork business in this book, then outwork sewing should be regarded as a seasonal business. Nearly all of the work in 1764 given and brought home occurred between March and May, as seen for instance in some of the transactions noted for that May.

May 8	Mrs V. Dooser 16 white shirts to make
9	Mrs Young 8 white shirts to make
9	Mrs U. Dooser Brought home 7 chk shirts
	Mrs Cole Brought home 7 chk shirts
11	Miss Keaty Smith brought home 14 chk shirts
	Mrs Huson brought home 1 chk shirt
	Miss Waldron Brought home 5 chk shirts

A much smaller flurry of sewing took place in January, but no sewing is recorded for the months from June to December. However, credits for purchases that used sewing for payment took place principally in September and October. Other years may have shown slightly different patterns. The Albany merchant did note activity in his outwork business in August of 1761, when Miss Mary McClean "brought home 18 pr trousers," while Miss Polly Burch and Miss Phipbi Garison returned pieces of checked fabric made into shirts. The clustering of the work suggests that as well as being influenced by the season, the work may have been requested

---

<sup>23</sup> Albany Retail Merchant Accounts, Jan. 10, Aug. 20, Nov. 29, 1764.

by special order from a purchaser.

Many of the entries made by the Albany merchant simply noted the flow of goods. It was only when the women or their husbands actually used the credit derived from the sewing that the Albany Merchant wrote in "Credit By making xx shirts." We have no real way of knowing how thorough he was in his records or whether he sometimes kept track of sewing elsewhere. For the year 1764, the Albany Retail merchant recorded the manufacture of 227 check shirts, 137 white shirts, 25 pair of trousers, 69 pairs of leggings and 1 bedcover, most of the credit being used in the fall.

Sewing credits listed by Samuel Tyms also clustered in the fall, but neither his account book nor Daniel Campbell's various accounts tell when the women actually sewed the items in question. For Samuel Tyms' business, his "sewing book" perhaps recorded when the work was done, while his account book verified the spending of the credits. Outwork sewing very likely never served as the primary source of income for a family, but instead supplemented other income.<sup>19</sup>

Some outworkers in Albany did much more sewing than others, giving some households a higher economic stake in

---

<sup>19</sup> Tyms mentions his sewing book in a transaction with William White, Tyms Day Book, May 22, 1764; Stansell, City of Women, 108, also notes the seasonality of the clothing trade in the nineteenth century.

outwork than others. In 1764, Mrs. Hilton, for example, made 16 checked shirts, 34 pairs of leggings and 12 pairs of trousers. Mrs. Mary Van Dooser made 24 check shirts and 32 white shirts. Miss Clark made 23 check shirts and 16 white shirts. Between them Mrs. Cole and her husband Lambert completed 31 pairs of leggings, 13 pairs of trousers, 63 checked shirts, and 16 white shirts as well as 2 sets of sheets. On the other end of the production scale we find Miss Keaty Smith. Living "at C Pembertons" in May of 1764, Smith took home material but the Retail Merchant never recorded that she brought it "home" to him. Captain Pemberton operated an inn where Smith could have stayed for a short while before moving on. Whether Smith returned the fabric or never got her credit for work done, her brief involvement with outwork could not have been a great help to her.

A woman who needed cash for the purchase of goods could not necessarily count on receiving a cash payment for her work. Quite the opposite seems to have occurred, in fact. The credits received by women sewing often could only be translated into consumer goods. One of Daniel Campbell's account books lists women as being paid for sewing with shoes. Other women on the list are simply noted as having been paid. Campbell certainly thought in terms of monetary value. A different "Memorandum of Shirts given out to be

made" kept by Campbell listed nine women and a total value for their work of £ 127.<sup>30</sup>

According to his account book, the Retail Merchant of Albany paid out very little cash, while accepting only sewing and cash as credits toward purchases. A number of women used cash in partial payment for their accounts, but unlike some Schenectady merchants, the Retail Merchant did not lend cash to women very often. Miss Bratt essentially bought 4 shillings, when she used part of her 16 shilling credit for "shirts making." Women who sewed for the merchants almost certainly spent the equivalent of the payment in the merchants' own stores. Miss Clark needed to

---

<sup>30</sup> Campbell & Andrews Account Book, Schenectady, 1761-1765, Campbell Papers, NYSL; An entry of "Cash" in an account book could mean more than one thing, depending on its context. If the entry occurred as a debt, with the customer being called "Dr", that meant that the customer borrowed, or took away cash. If a creditor, or "Cr", paid in cash, that meant that he or she reduced their debt by handing over cash of some kind. Cash could mean any of various kinds of money, whether New York dollars, Spanish coins, British shillings, or other kind of money. Some New York paper money had a face value of ten shillings or less. A man accused of counterfeiting in Albany attempted to duplicate a Spanish coin, Bill against McCarthy for passing counterfeit money, 1752, Miscellaneous Mss., N-YHS. In the Connecticut Valley during this period merchants accepted English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French money as well as Massachusetts money and York Tenor. Margaret E. Martin, "Merchants and Trade of the Connecticut River Valley, 1750-1820," Smith College Studies in History, vol. 24 (1938/1939), 151-152; For a different perspective on the use of cash, see Michael Merrill, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," Radical History Review 4(1977): 42-71.

sew the equivalent of fifteen to twenty shirts to buy the shoes and piece of hanging paper that she purchased in May. Even though payments for outwork were not always made in cash, women were drawn into an economic relationship that relied increasingly on cash.<sup>31</sup>

The accounts of payment to women for shirts sewn are by no means complete, however. More women sewed shirts for the retail merchant in Albany than bought from him, suggesting that some payments never made their way into his store accounts. If the merchant kept a cash book, as some merchants did, more payments to women may have been recorded there. The lost sewing accounts of Samuel Tyms likely detail payments more completely than his store accounts.

The outwork system that operated in Albany and Schenectady was not clearly part of an industrializing trend. However, it was part of an overall transformation of the regional commercial economy. Cash generally became more important and wage labor began to replace earlier systems of labor that relied on long term contracts or indentures of one type or another. Gary Nash described this process as it affected laboring men in Philadelphia during the Seven Years' War. Temporarily high wages encouraged construction

---

<sup>31</sup> Both Tyms and the Albany Retail Merchant kept better track of the value of goods going out than they did goods or work coming in.

workers to switch from year-long agreements to daily wages. However, once the post-war depression struck, employers were not eager to return long-term commitments and wage laborers ended up with no job security.<sup>32</sup>

For women in Albany and Schenectady, the progression to wage labor was not that straightforward. As merchants increasingly relied on payments of cash for goods, the few marketable products of women's work carried increasingly little weight as credit. While butter and eggs figured regularly in accounts from the 1740s, and wampum was an important form of payment for some women during the mid-1750s, by the 1760s, cash and cash-like notes or bills loomed large as the major source of payments. As cash came to dominate the local economy, women, of necessity, participated, limited though they were by their access to it. The unidentified Albany merchant took nothing as payment from women except sewing and cash. In order to purchase from that particular merchant, women had little option. And, since the economy was still under stress from the effects of the wars and the soldiers, women needed ways to support themselves. Sewing shirts and trousers provided

---

<sup>32</sup> Nash, Urban Crucible, 260.

one means of connecting with consumer goods and merchants.<sup>33</sup>

In New England during the same period, some women made absolute progress in terms of amount of wages paid to them for work. At the same time, their wages relative to men's wages slipped. During the Seven Years' War, the numbers of women showing up in New England account books as wage laborers increased dramatically just as occurred in Albany and Schenectady commercial records during the later years of the war. However, the causes for the increase in New England appear to be quite different from the causes of the increase in New York. Historian Gloria Main suggests that in New England, the greater presence of women performing wage work stemmed from the absence of men due to the war. Indeed, the work that she discusses clearly does reflect women taking an larger role in men's outdoor work. In New York, the work that women developed during the war grew out of the presence of soldiers, not the absence of local men. The war created tensions in both the New England economy and the New York economy that required a readjustment of women's work. The key here, however, is not the actual wage that women received, but the fact that they could take on work as necessary. Although Main sees the result as positive for

---

<sup>33</sup>

Albany Retail Merchant Account Book, see especially the entries for 1764.



women in New England, the same cannot be said categorically for women in New York.<sup>34</sup>

Outwork did not supply women with an easy way to support themselves. Samuel Tyms paid about 1 shilling to sew a checked shirt and more than 2 shillings for a white shirt, while Daniel Campbell did not specify. The Albany Retail Merchant paid women between 1 shilling and 1 shilling 2 pence for sewing a shirt. Mrs. Tice of Johnstown thus earned 2 pounds 2 shillings and 6 pence for sewing 34 shirts, while for 14 shirts the Coles of Albany earned 14 shillings. Buying one of those shirts could cost 11 shillings so the mark-up seems quite steep. According to historian Gloria Main, wages for day laborers in New England ranged from 8 pence per day for women to 23 pence for men during this period. The money that women earned in Albany likely gave women some say-so in domestic spending. A few women earned the equivalent of several months living with their sewing, but the market for shirts did not extend year round. Mrs. Mary VanDooser sewed the equivalent of a minimum of 55 shillings (2 pounds 15 shillings), a substantial sum but not likely to last long with shoes

---

<sup>34</sup>

Gloria L. Main, "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," *WMO* 3rd. Ser. 51(1994):39-66. Main does not discuss extensively the problem of how women were paid, although she does mention that women in Connecticut who made ropes of onions often received their pay in store goods.

costing 10 shillings and a pound of tea, 9 shillings.<sup>35</sup>

The military presence in the area triggered an increase in the overall prevalence of money in the economy. In Albany and Schenectady, British soldiers purchased large quantities of consumer goods from merchants.<sup>36</sup> Although extended short-term credit, the soldiers and companies always paid in ready money, thus simplifying a potentially troublesome credit relationship.

The use of cash and other money-like instruments, such as notes, grew generally more common in the years between 1750 and 1770.<sup>37</sup> In 1760, nearly two-thirds of the creditors to the author of the Unidentified Day Book from Schenectady paid in cash. In records from 1766 to 1767, as sales became increasingly depersonalized, slightly more people made payments to Phyn and Ellice in cash as paid in furs and other goods.<sup>38</sup> With money in hand, it no longer mattered as much who you were. Merchants included strangers and outsiders as part of their clientele more readily.

---

<sup>35</sup> Main, "Gender, Work, and Wages," 48.

<sup>36</sup> Unidentified Account (Day) Book, Schenectady, 1756-1764, Campbell Papers, NYSL; Tymes Day Book; Campbell and Andrews Account Book.

<sup>37</sup> Mann, Neighbors and Strangers, 28; The types of cash used to pay off debts, including book debts varied widely.

<sup>38</sup> Phyn and Ellice Account Book, Schenectady, 1767-1768, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL.

In this economy that featured currency so prominently, women were not excluded from the use of cash. In some ways, they were reduced to it by a lack of extensive credit and by the limited marketability of their products. Women regularly used cash to pay for all or parts of accounts, despite their overall lack of options for earning it. In March of 1760, Miss Wendle bought 7 1/2 yards of damask at a value of over 7 pounds and paid for it in cash. (This was tremendously expensive. Most purchases by women were much smaller.) In December of 1761, Mrs. Vanvalcenborough paid her account "By making 14 check shirts" and "By Cash" totaling £ 1.8.6. In 1762, John Butler recorded in the account of Barent Wemple that Mrs Annaty Wemple had bought 9 ells of "osenbrigs". He also wrote an entry "Credit by cash 60/."<sup>39</sup> The amounts of cash used by women were very rarely over one pound in value, but the use of cash occurred regularly. The accounts of the Albany merchants and the Schenectady merchants from the 1760s contain single, married, and widowed women using cash, but the Albany books contain noticeably more single women. Perhaps unmarried women flocked to Albany to meet the soldiers.

Women not only used cash to pay off existing accounts;

---

<sup>39</sup>

Albany Retail Merchant Accounts, Mar. 24 and Dec. 16, 1761; John Butler Account Book, Account of Barent Wemple.

they borrowed cash as well. It is unclear what happened to any specific sum that was borrowed. Did the women who borrowed money use it to pay off a different merchant and then do the same again? In 1762, Samuel Tyms recorded an entry that charged "To cash Lent 0.1.7" to the account of Susanna Van Patten. In John Butler's account book, Mr. Peter Quackenbuss was charged in 1763 for 5 shillings "To cash to your wife." The account of Johannes Kniff showed an entry in 1766, "To Cash to your wife .4.-." indicating that married women also took it upon themselves to borrow cash.<sup>40</sup> Merchants consistently noted when a wife took part in transactions, presumably to defuse any later disputes with the husband. Wives were by no means kept out of the exchange system. Widows certainly needed to take part in the local economy, but they also needed a background in the way the commercial system worked. The single woman sewing to buy ribbon, the married woman delivering deerskins for her husband and herself, and the widow paying cash for wine, all participated in the same exchange network.

For most people, the amounts of credit or money involved in purchases and transaction remained quite small. For women, these amounts stayed smaller still. If, as Clifford Geertz points out, the balance of power in a creditor-debtor

---

<sup>40</sup> Tyms Day Book, Oct. 12, 1762; John Butler Accounts, Accounts of Peter Quackenbuss and Johannes Kniff.

relationship shifts with the size of the debt, it seems possible that by keeping the debts of women and common men small, merchants and traders could maintain their own economic authority. What credit was available to women came through local retail merchants. Restricting access to credit and cash restricted women's economic options. However, although those options were limited, they were not eliminated. To people without resources, a small amount of cash or credit could be remarkably useful.<sup>42</sup>

Bills sent to individual customers, however, betray the stress of collecting long overdue debts, as when an Albany trader wrote to Mrs. Breeze at Greenbush about an account four years past due. Sometimes, however, the dividing line between customer and merchant blurred. When Mrs. Jelles Fonda, the wife of a Mohawk Valley trader, brought deerskins to exchange for credit in Schenectady, John Butler recorded under her husband's account, "Credit by 20 3/4 of Dears Leather at 5/ Mrs Fonda offert 6/ but I told her I would not give but 5/." Offer and counter-offer reveal the tension between the customer and the trader. Generally, disputes are not recorded in accounts, but here the author recorded not

---

<sup>42</sup> Clifford Geertz, Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 37; Carole Shammas, The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 243.

only the agreed upon price but how it was arrived at.<sup>42</sup>

The market for outwork sewing collapsed by the late 1760s. While John Rykman was credited for payment "due yr wife upon a Sewing acct" in 1762, such credits do not appear in account books that cover the late 1760s. However, a new market for spun thread or yarn seems to have been opening up. John Butler gave the wife of Johanes Apley credit for spinning in 1763. In 1767, he sold a handkerchief to Peter Qackenbusse's daughter, "but she is to spin for it." Again in 1771, Butler credited Mary Connor "by Spinning."<sup>43</sup>

By the late 1760s we see the presence of women receding from the account books. In the account book of Phyn and Ellice, Schenectady traders, the number of women taking part

---

<sup>42</sup> Brees Family Receipts and Accounts, Staats Family Papers, NYSL; John Butler Accounts, Account of Capt. Jelles Fonda, 1768.

<sup>43</sup> John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard discuss the effects of the Seven Years' War on New York trade suggesting that "New Yorkers became distracted...by the potential profits that newly conquered Canada offered for overland trade," The Economy of British America, 1607-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 197.; Unidentified Schenectady Account Book, Account of John Rykman, Jr.; John Butler Account Book, Accounts of Peter Qackenbusse, Johanes Apley, and Mary Conner; The 1760s, in Massachusetts, saw a wave of spinning bees that had developed a patriotic flavor by the 1770s. These spinning bees have been discussed in terms of their religious connections and their political implications. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "'Daughters of Liberty': Religious Women in Revolutionary New England," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., Women in the Age of the American Revolution, p.211-243; Kerber, Women of the Republic, 41-42, also discusses the politics of spinning.

in transactions drops to less than 6% of exchanges. Part of this may have to do with the particular trade of Phyn & Ellice. Much of their business consisted of toting goods to the various forts, but not producing shirts, at least not for the record in this account book. What is new in the Phyn & Ellice accounts is the presence of transactions noted with no customer name attached. For the first time, we see entries that say, "Cash Debtor to Sundries Sold." The emphasis has shifted away from accumulated book debt, to payments received at the time of purchase. In 1767-1768, Phyn & Ellice made this entry 64 times, while crediting a woman for payment only once.

Some of these cash exchanges could belong to women, but for Phyn & Ellice, the cash was the goal and it did not much matter who gave it to them. The credits otherwise accepted included nothing that a woman could easily supply, since women normally couldn't transport goods or collect furs. Phyn & Ellice stated their intention to rely on cash, in preference to goods or other forms of credit, even in their dealings with other merchants. In 1767 and 1768, they wrote to Samuel Tyms, telling him that they hoped to convert all their outstanding accounts to cash, and reminding him of his debt to them. They were polite to Isaac Vroman, a local man, regarding his debt and those of his siblings, writing, "we should be glad to know of[sic] you have thought of any method

of payment." They ended their letter with a thinly veiled threat, because it "would be extreamly disagreeable to demand in any other manner." This change in the uses of cash did not shut women out of retail establishments, but it did serve to diminish the importance of individual women, and rendered them far more anonymous in the records.<sup>44</sup>

Even though women's work may have been largely organized around the household, the local economy clearly made use of women's labor, integrating their skills into the larger economic patterns of New York. For those who view the path of industrialization as either a steady march of progress towards a golden age of capitalism, or a downward slope that carried the dignity of workers in a handbasket to hell, the history of women and their labor has proven difficult to include in the parade of work transformed. To extend the metaphor, women spent more time crossing the street against traffic than they did in moving ahead. The condition of the street might change, leaving more mudpuddles to get around or different travellers to avoid, but any actual change in

---

<sup>44</sup> Phyn & Ellice Account Book; Phyn & Ellice Letterbook, 1767. Microfilm, NAC; Other traders did not appreciate the diligence of Phyn and Ellice. One trader wrote another, "But I believe from my Soul that AE [Alexander Ellice] would forgo anyone's good will for 2 1/2 prcent-Curse such a narrowness of sentiment...may my Soul ever despise it." A. Macomb to J. Porteous, Detroit, Nov. 1, 1776, John Porteous Papers, Buffalo & Erie Historical Society, Microfilm, Reel 1, NAC.



position, relative to the place of men in the economy, came very slowly.

External factors determined which forms of women's work had value in the marketplace. Some forms of produce, such as butter and wampum, dropped out of use as items of exchange. Christopher Clark suggests that development of outwork in rural Massachusetts in the early nineteenth century required the elimination of some other form of work. In the Albany-Schenectady area, the sewing networks that developed may have replaced other forms of exchange for women, such as butter, and therefore eliminated the exchange value of the work associated with butter-making. The system of outwork that relied on the work of women evolved spontaneously in response to a direct need, and just as quickly evaporated, leaving women to develop other strategies for economic survival. As a group, women were sufficiently flexible about their work that they could adapt to new economic circumstances.<sup>45</sup>

The limited and temporary role that women held while performing outwork should not disguise the fact that the work of women forms an important part of the fabric of the regional economy of New York. As local commerce shifted from one type of trade to another, the work of women shifted along with it. The specific changes introduced to Hudson-Mohawk

---

<sup>45</sup> Clark, Roots of Rural Capitalism, 180.

mercantilism such as the influx of cash, the boom and bust of wartime speculation, and the refocusing of the Indian trade all added up to change for women as well as men. Some women were able to take advantage of the market for wampum, before the Seven Years' War. During the war years, women in both Schenectady and Albany responded to the demand for shirts by sewing for local merchants. The responsiveness of local economies to corrections in the regional and global economies depended, in part, on the ability of women to accomodate their work to the changes.

Women quickly adapted to both the use of cash and the chance to sell their sewing to a merchant because the merchants had something they wanted, namely, consumer goods. For poorer women, outwork provided a connection to the consumer revolution. With a flowered gauze handkerchief, or a pound of tea or sugar as a lure, women of all ages saw the stores as an outlet for their creativity.

## Chapter 4.

### Commercial Encounters: Native American Women and Trade

In the years 1759 and 1760, an unidentified trader in Schenectady recorded a number of exchanges with a woman he called alternately Salla or Sally Montour, occasionally using the honorific, "Mrs.". In February, on two visits, she bought raisins, cheese, chocolate, spices, tobacco, and almonds paying with more than £ 40 cash.<sup>1</sup> Sarah, or Sally, Montour carried on an active trade with the unidentified author of the Schenectady Day Book, paying for large

---

<sup>1</sup> Unidentified Account (Day) Book, Schenectady, 1756-1764, Daniel Campbell Papers, NYSL. The Montour (or Monture) family of the eighteenth century had its roots in both Iroquois and French culture. Family members attained a certain renown as interpreters, acting as cultural brokers between Iroquois groups and the British. See for instance, the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 3:147-148, "Couc, Elizabeth?," and Nancy Hagedorn, "'Faithful, Knowing, and Prudent': Andrew Montour as Interpreter and Cultural Broker, 1740-1772," in Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), pp. 44-60, and James H. Merrell, "'The Cast of His Countenance': Reading Andrew Montour" in Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp.13-39.

quantities of goods and freighting "up." Her commercial life provides a prism to focus the discussion of Iroquois women and the quality of their engagement with white commerce. For Sally Montour and other Native American women, exchanges with traders provided important moments of contact with white society. These encounters with the white material world left Indian women with foreign goods, which they then used for their own purposes. The acquisition of imported items required that Native American women produce, or have access to, goods that the traders would take in exchange and be able to re-shape customary work habits to fit the demands of the traders and the politics of the moment. Their lives influenced by circumstances often outside of their control, circumstances very different from those faced by white and black women in New York, Native American women crossed and re-crossed the cultural and diplomatic frontiers of the province as they traded.

Sally Montour likely arrived at Schenectady following a well-established route used by numerous traders traveling in country to the west of Schenectady. On her return journey, she very likely set out from Schenectady on the Mohawk River in a batteau, boats manned by three or so "batto-men" and used to transport goods as far west as was practical, to the forts of western New York and the Great Lakes. She may have accompanied her barrels of wine and casks of raisins to

their destination, to ensure their safe arrival even though she had already paid for their freightage. The purchase of these goods took time, and fortitude. Trading in imported goods required more than a casual commitment to profit. In these frontier conditions, trading was more than occasionally dangerous and called for the negotiation of political rapids as well as those in the river.<sup>-</sup>

In the early years of New York's settlement by the Dutch, local courts enforced rules that banned people from taking inappropriate walks into the woods, walks during which local whites could encounter and trade with Indians outside of community controls. In Albany, for instance, traders faced regulations that determined the time, place, and personnel of the trade as many Indians brought their furs to Albany. Ordinances of the 1670s forbade white residents from enticing Indians to trade, although people remained legally able to trade in their own houses.<sup>3</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century, the mechanics of trading

---

<sup>-</sup> For the facts of Sally Montour's life, see DCB, 6: 7-9, "Ainse, Sarah," and Fred C. Hamil, "Sally Ainse, Fur Trader," Historical Bulletin No. 3, 1939, Issued by the Algonquin Club, Detroit; John Lees mentioned that "battos" heading west from Schenectady commonly took three men to operate. John Lees Journal, 1768, NAC, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Martha Dickinson Shattuck, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwyck, New Netherland, 1652-1664," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1993), 241-246.

had changed, along with the market for furs. The Indian trade depended more on the shipment of goods by whites to far-flung forts and trading posts and much less on the movement of Indians to the now long-established white settlements. The papers of Sir William Johnson document the arrival and departure of many groups of Indians in the Mohawk Valley but very few purchases by Indians turn up in the accounts of local merchants and traders, especially after 1755. Sally Montour looms large as an Indian trading directly with white merchants at their place of trade. The transfer of goods that Johnson recorded with Indian men took place as part of negotiations between the Indian Department of the British Colonial Office and the Iroquois tribes concerned. Sally Montour traded as individual, following paths that no government controlled. Trading, for Indian women, often included this tension between personal interest and the larger political scene.<sup>4</sup>

The sources that form the foundation of this chapter consist primarily of the account books of a number of

---

<sup>4</sup> James Sullivan et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965)[hereafter Johnson Papers]; Most correctly, the term "Iroquois" refers to the family of Iroquoian languages, but also is commonly used to identify the members of the Six Nations: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras, who spoke those languages. The languages are important but when I use the term, I refer to people connected with these tribes.

traders in the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, and the papers and accounts of Sir William Johnson. The accounts set the boundaries of this discussion, exposing as they do a small portion of the lives of the subjects. Using the accounts we are able to see a number of Indian women, principally members of the Iroquois tribes, in terms of what they bought and how they paid for what they bought. As seen in the transactions of white and black women, the way that women paid for goods can tell us quite a lot about their work and their lives. This is no less true for the Native American women in the books and accounts. By the mid-eighteenth century the work of Iroquois women had become entangled with the Anglo-American reliance on wages or payment for work, as trading for goods remained snarled with political events.<sup>5</sup>

The evidence of the account books portrays encounters between people of different cultures, people who shared an understanding of a commercial moment. How did Native American women in New York deal with the white traders? How do these encounters relate to happenings in the commercial world? Events of the 1750s and 1760s created intense cultural pressure for Indians in New York, but individuals

---

<sup>5</sup> Account Book of Mohawk Valley Trader, 1762-1776, Found in the papers of Jelles Fonda, N-YHS; Unidentified Day Book, Schenectady, 1756-1764, Campbell Family Papers; Robert Sanders, Account Book, Albany, 1749-1753, Robert Sanders Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collection; Unidentified Albany General Trader Account Book, 1775; all at the NYSL.

did not react uniformly to these pressures. The work and trading experiences of one Indian woman were not necessarily like those of another; these women did have choices. In the accounts kept by various merchants, we witness a series of exchanges that took place in the years leading up to the American Revolution, illuminating the strategies used by Indian women as they confronted the political and cultural difficulties of trading on the New York frontier.

The various tribes collectively called the Iroquois formed an important component of the commercial economy of frontier New York. Historians have explored many aspects of Indian-white relations in New York, focusing most heavily on the diplomatic relations between the Anglo-European societies and the nations of the Iroquoian confederacy. The history of the confederacy and the importance of the Five Nations (later Six) have occupied many historians, as the most compelling story of the time. The wars between Indians and whites initially were studied as military operations, often with the Indians serving as no more than pawns in the wars between European empires. More recently, however, historians have drawn the Iroquois more into the picture by emphasizing the role of the Indians in the shaping of both policy and war, and by looking at the cultural role that war played in Iroquois and Algonquian culture. In both contexts, the political authority of women has attracted



attention as important to understanding the involvement of the society as a whole in the activities of war. That authority has been thought to rest on the economic importance of the traditional work of Iroquois women.<sup>6</sup>

The women discussed in this chapter were exceptional in more than one regard. The lives of Sarah Montour and Molly Brant are better documented than the lives of most Native American women, especially those who lived in the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Decidedly not anonymous, the movements and activities of Montour and Brant caught the eyes and ears of numerous observers. Their accounts with merchants and traders allow us to explore how they, as Indian women, operated as traders and consumers, how they connected to the larger empire of trade while remaining outsiders to that

---

<sup>6</sup> See for instance, Francis X. Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," WMO 3rd Ser. 40(1983): 528-559, and Matthew Dennis, Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), for a discussion of Iroquois culture, war and trade in an earlier period.

<sup>7</sup> These are not the only (fairly) well-documented Indian women from the colonial period. See for example the brief discussion of Hilletie (Van Slyke) in Daniel Richter, "Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations, 1664-1701," JAH 75(1988): 40-67 and Katherine Tekakwitha in Nancy Shoemaker, "Kateri Tekakwitha's Tortuous Path to Sainthood," in Shoemaker ed., Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 49-71.

world.

Sarah or Sally Montour appears in New York records between 1756 and 1767, buying goods from Schenectady merchants. Born Sarah Ainse perhaps as early as 1728, she became the second wife of Andrew (also called Henry) Montour when she was 17. The Montour family had its roots in the French and Iroquois cultures. Sarah Ainse may have been born an Oneida, she certainly established connections among them over the years. She may not have been a member of any Iroquois group at all but she had a deep acquaintance with their culture and people. The culture of the Iroquois speaking tribes allowed a considerable amount of movement between local Indian groups, whether in the formal adoption sanctioned by war or in more casual arrangements. During her travels in New York, the Iroquois tribes predominated among Sarah Montour's Indian contacts.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> DCB, 6 :7-9; Isabel Thompson Kelsay claims that Montour was an Oneida in-law of Joseph Brant, Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 516-517, but James Merrell raises the possibility that Montour was related to members of the Conoy tribe, "Reading Andrew Montour," 25, fn. 27. The later years of Sarah Montour's life are as intriguing as those I cover in this chapter. She continued to trade in Canada, apparently largely in liquor, continued to interpret, and engage in disputes when she felt like it. Nancy Hagedorn, "Faithful, Knowing, and Prudent," 48, feels that the Montours' marriage had been dissolved by the mid-1750s when Andrew went to work for William Johnson. My evidence suggests that their connection may have lasted longer. Many thanks to James Merrell for his assistance in tracking down references to Sarah Montour.

The Montours spent the earlier years of their marriage in Pennsylvania. In 1753, Andrew Montour ran into financial difficulty. In a letter to Richard Hockley, Richard Peters wrote that Andrew

has been arrested for fifty pounds and indeed I would have suffered him to have gone to Jail for he is an expensive man having a Wife who takes up Goods at any rate and to any value, but since he is going to Onondago in a publick Character and is lately chosen a Member of the Onondago Council for the Ohio Indians it may be dangerous to the Publick to suffer him to be imprisoned.

Sally had apparently begun trading on a noticeable scale by at least 1753.<sup>9</sup>

Richard Peters was only too happy to blame Sally Montour for much of Andrew's financial problems. She herself might have blamed other forces, such as the need to supply provisions for transient Indians and other visitors, or Andrew himself. In 1754, Conrad Weiser stopped at Andrew Montour's in Pennsylvania. He recorded,

I found at Andrew Montour's about fifteen Indians, men women and children; and more had been there, but were now gone. Andrew's wife had killed a sheep for them some days ago. She complained they had done great damage to the Indian corn which was now fit to roast; and I found that there were most everyday Indians of those that came from Ohio with some errand or another, which always wanted some victuals in the bargain. I gave them ten pounds

---

<sup>9</sup> "Notes and Queries," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 34(1915): 239.

of the governments money.<sup>13</sup>

Sally Montour's earliest known work history combined elements of agriculture and trade. In the comments of Weiser about Montour and the damaged corn crop, he perpetuated the longstanding association of Indian women to agricultural work, especially the cultivation of maize. Among the Iroquois, the close linking of women and the staple crop of corn gave women authority on a number of levels, not the least being a very real involvement in decisions of diplomacy, war, and trade. When Sarah Montour complained to Conrad Weiser about the condition of the cornfields, she complained about the damage to her own crop and claimed payment for using her produce to further a political aim. Conrad Weiser portrayed her as begrudging of the hospitality given to the visiting Indians, not wishing to agree or not seeing that here, the visitors only came because of an official situation. Montour nevertheless had the force of personality to successfully demand reimbursement.

Andrew Montour's drinking habits created financial and social problems for himself, including an incident in 1760 where he again faced jail, this time over a tavern debt. In

---

<sup>13</sup> Charles A. Hanna, The Wilderness Trail or the Ventures and Adventures of the Pennsylvania Traders on the Allegheny Path (New York: AMS Press, 1971 rep. from 1911 edition), 254, (Weiser quoted) 232.

1756, the Montours left Pennsylvania for New York where Andrew Montour began his work as an agent and captain for the British Indian Department under William Johnson. In April, the three young Montour children and their older brother by Andrew's first wife were left under the care of the Pennsylvania Governor, "to be independent of the mother." In May, Andrew interpreted at a meeting at Fort Johnson and in October, on the 31st, Nicholas, the son of Andrew and Sara Montour was baptized in Albany.::

In March of 1757, Sally Montour served as interpreter during a meeting between William Johnson and a Conoy chief suggesting that she knew both Conoy and English. In April of the same year, she had traveled to the Oneida Castle, where she was scheduled to meet her husband. These early New York records do not document any trading by Montour but by early 1759, she appeared to have found her niche, as a trader of liquor and wine. The records suggest a wide-

---

:: Hagedorn, "Andrew Montour," 58. I have not found any further explanation of the incident regarding the Pennsylvania authorities and the Montour children but according to James Merrell, the children remained under the care of Pennsylvania authorities for some years, "Reading Andrew Montour," 38, fn 59; Jonathan Pearson, Contributions for the Genealogies of the First Settlers of the Ancient County of Albany from 1630-1800 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978[reprint of 1872 edition]), see entry under "Montour." This is the only evidence I have run across that puts Sarah Montour in Albany, although Hanna claims that Andrew Montour passed through Albany on a trip he made with Scarrooyady on his way to Philadelphia in March of 1756 (Wilderness Trail, 237).

ranging familiarity with many of the principals of larger events in New York as well as a continuing connection with her husband, as she merged her interests in trading with her interpretive abilities.<sup>22</sup>

Montour's work as a trader of goods dominates the records of her time on the New York frontier. As a woman trader, she was unusual but by no means unique. Women had long played an active role in the Indian trade of New York and Canada. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, women regularly took part in the fur trade, trekking furs to Albany and Canadian fur posts. Historian Gretchen Green speculates that as many of half of Robert Sanders' couriers were women. The possibility exists that they were more than simple couriers and held an economic stake in the outcome of the exchange. This role has been recognized although the individual economic interests of the women has been little examined. When Susannah and her husband brought furs for trade with Robert Sanders in 1751, they brought as well musquash (muskrat) skins for her sister. At Caughnawaga in Canada, two Frenchwomen ran a store and moved furs during the first half of the eighteenth century, until they were shut down by the French government for defiance of the smuggling laws. The government found

---

<sup>22</sup> Johnson Papers, 9:640, 661.

that their trade was too brisk, but the Indians apparently had no difficulty accepting women in that particular role.<sup>13</sup>

Iroquois women certainly traveled extensively, both with and without their husbands. Women from Canada appear in the account book of Robert Sanders, primarily with their husbands, as for instance when he sold Michel Satquish and Cathrine his wife strouds and gartering and accepted the rest of the payment for "1 Silver Band In her hair." Sanders sometimes noted the name of the woman indicating that he knew her, as when he recorded on August 8, 1753 that he had sold 2 gallons of rum to "Susane an Indian Squa". Susannah sometimes traveled with her husband and sometimes without. A woman transporting a load of wood, who was attacked and beaten, travelled alone. Sally Montour trekked through New York on her own, even if she journeyed in company with others.<sup>14</sup> She acted as a trader, making

---

<sup>13</sup> E.P.H., "Unrest at Caughnawaga or the Lady Fur Traders of Sault St. Louis," Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum 11(1963): 155-160; Gretchen Green, "A New People in an Age of War: The Kahnawake Iroquois, 1667-1760," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1991), 276, 270-271; Thomas Eliot Norton, The Fur Trade in Colonial New York 1686-1776 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 127-128.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts, (end pages) November 18, 1751; Most but not all of Sanders entries regarding Indians are in the end pages of the account book. I imagine he made most of his entries for transactions with Indians in his "wampen book."; Green, "A New People in an Age of War," 286; Johnson Papers 13:106-107.

Richard Peters nervous. Her independence perhaps led him to cast blame on her for her husband's money problems. While merchants and traders might do business with Indian women, they did not necessarily care to see those same women running an active business.<sup>15</sup>

In February of 1759, Montour began series of trips to Schenectady to buy items for resale, setting the scenes for a trading career that carried her into the next century. One of her customers was Sir William Johnson, to whom she sold liquor for a burial in mid- February. In December, she returned to Schenectady, this time purchasing 2 barrels of rum and 1 barrel of sugar. On this occasion she paid partly with cash and partly with "3 Merten Skins, 6 Racons Skins, 13 Rats Skins & 1 Bad Oater" (Martens, Raccoons, Muskrats, Otter). In February of 1760, she made 4 visits to the store, paying again in cash and buying cheese, empty barrels, rum, "1 Green Rug," pigeon shot, sugar and cordial. She paid cash for "Carriage up" or to have the goods delivered, most likely to Fort Stanwix. She made purchases again in March, April, and July. In March she again supplied William Johnson the liquor for a burial. Much of what she bought that year was liquor, or items that could be used to make punches, such as sugar and lime juice. She

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert Sanders Accounts (end pages) March 14, 1751, August 8, 1753, September 1, 1751.



also bought ribbon and 29 1/2 gross of pipes, and paid for "Carrege up." More than once, Sally Montour sent someone else with money to pay her account, once sending Lewis Philip with £ 12, and once sending Powlap with £ 2. These details enrich our understanding of the place that Sally Montour created for herself in the frontier economy.<sup>16</sup> Very few women turn up in the records buying large quantities of any item for cash. The amounts of currency used, and the steady and continuing contact with traders mark Sally Montour's history as worthy of mention.

Sally Montour's ongoing commerce with Schenectady and Mohawk Valley merchants continued a process of cultural change begun with first contact. However, the nature of this change was determined as much by the existing Iroquois culture as it was by the Anglo-American economy. The Iroquois shared with other Native American groups both the flexibility to culturally incorporate trade with outside groups and the ability to reject some components of that alien system, especially the concept of steadily accumulating debt. While the Iroquois, both individually and as groups, wanted to trade with the English and French,

---

<sup>16</sup> See for example Unidentified Day Book, Schenectady, February 7, 15, 1759, December 31, 1759, February 10, 11, 13, 20, 1760, March 22, 1760, April 24, 1760, July 8, 1760, August 4, 1760 (Powlap), June 5, 1760 (Lewis Philips); Johnson Papers 3: 160, 997.

they showed little interest in establishing credit, as the traders understood credit. Some traders, in some areas, tried hard to put Indians into debt. Some succeeded, leveraging land in the process.<sup>17</sup>

The cultural attitude towards exchange and debt meant that the New York Indians readily accepted cash as a medium of exchange, and showed an increasing unwillingness to act without payment in hand. Each transaction, in and of itself, was complete, at least ideally. The trading relationship then remained as strong as the last exchange. Substituting money for one half of the exchange fell within the bounds of acceptability for the Iroquois tribes. Cash arguably became a significant economic tool in the hands of the Indians, supporting customary ideas of exchange. Credit, on the other hand, which dragged out the exchange and gave one side some power over the other, did not suit the Indians' sense of fair trade.<sup>18</sup> This is not to say that local groups could avoid all debt or that cash served all

---

<sup>17</sup> For an account of how this worked in early Massachusetts see Peter A. Thomas, "Cultural Change on the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665," in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contact on Native American Cultural Institutions A.D. 1000-1800 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1985), pp. 131-161.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis, Cultivating a Landscape of Peace, 177; Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 114.

their exchange needs, but increasingly throughout the late 1750s and 1760s, cash served an important purpose in trade and work. In Montour's transactions, she used cash to pay for the vast majority of her purchases, and paid off her debts promptly. Her payment with cash meant not only that she could obtain cash, but that her customers at Fort Stanwix and elsewhere also could.

The increased interest that the Six Nations had in money can be attributed in part to the unintended consequences of British military policy. William Johnson complained in 1756 that Iroquois warriors had become inordinately expensive to outfit and send along on an expedition. In an effort to pay Indians only for days actually spent serving the Crown, the British military commander had decided to pay per diem. The Iroquois then insisted on being paid for any day that they did anything, frustrating Johnson who wrote, "I have warmly remonstrated to the Indians upon the unreasonableness, & Novelty of paying them by the Day, which they will not now give up." This exposure to cash extended to Iroquois women, although they continued to have many fewer opportunities than men to acquire hard currency.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> The expanding British bureaucracy of war and empire is described by John Brewer, The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1783 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); Johnson Papers, 2:676.

Engagement with the Anglo-American economy reached beyond dealings with the military. Indian participation in the local cash and commodity system show up clearly in William Johnson's Indian Accounts. For example, an entry from 1755 shows Johnson billing the British government for "Cash for Prov[ision]s by the way home" for several families of Indians. The fact that a party of Iroquois, setting off into what could be described as wilderness, took cash to buy food suggests that currency had already assumed an important place in the frontier economy of New York. Johnson's records likewise show a willingness by numerous Iroquois, men and women, to accept currency, not only as payment for services, but in place of goods regularly supplied by Johnson, such as guns and shirts.<sup>25</sup> Coins, paper money, New York dollars and other fiat currency, comprised an important element of the later Indian trade in New York, even during periods when new issues of such money had been suppressed by the British government under the Currency Act. The status of this currency interested Johnson and others who relied on

---

<sup>25</sup> Johnson Papers, 2:583; 2:608 ("To Cash to some Old Indns: at the German Flatts to purchase Prov[ision]s, they having got lame & some sick returning from the general Meeting"), 2:636; 2: 590 ("To Seth of Schaharee, a principal Sachem 15 Dollars"); 2:638 ("To Cash to a Party of 13 Aghquageys in lieu of Shirts"); 4:431 for mention of a letter that talks about the arrival of a box of dollars and a bundle of paper currency in 1764; Johnson followed the fate of a bill to ban the paper currency of the colonies with great interest, 4:454, 157, 333; 7:753, 839.

liquid assets for much of their day-to-day operations. --

The Indians certainly used and understood currency. A trader in Schenectady recorded the payment in cash of £6, by "Thomas the Indian" in 1758. In 1769, while the Currency Act was in effect, Richard Smith wrote of New York Indians refusing to perform services without the standard cash payment. "The settled Indian wages here are 4/ [shillings] a day York Currency being Half a Dollar." Smith noted that their "chief amusement seems to be smoaking, Conversation & Hunting... They are ingenious at making Belts, embroidering Moccassons & Garments with Wampum. As they work little they consequently demand high Prices for their Labor." He also wrote that because of a crop disaster the previous year, "in great Measure they lived thro the Winter and the Spring on the Money received at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix...They were continually passing up to the Settlements to buy Provisions

---

-- Daniel H. Usner, Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), draws an interesting picture of the way a frontier economy worked in the Deep South, but with very little mention of cash. In New York, cash played a significant, although not solitary role in greasing the wheels of the economy; For more on the development and use of paper currency by the province of New York, see Edwin J. Perkins, "Conflicting Views on Fiat Currency: Britain and its North American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," Business History 33(1991): 8-30. Margaret E. Martin noted the use of New York dollars for purchases in the Connecticut River Valley in the 1750s. "Merchants and Trade of the Connecticut River Valley, 1750-1820," Smith College Studies in History, vol. 24 (1938/1939), 151-152.

and sometimes showed us money in their Bosoms." Access to money meant the ability to eat, even in difficult times. In the short term, cash currency took some pressure off of both men and women as they struggled to feed themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Table 6.

CREDITS OF INDIAN CUSTOMERS

Item	Male	Female
<b>Pawned</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>
Wampum Belt	12	1
Wampum Neck	6	--
Gun/Tomahawk	3	--
<b>Valuables/Cash</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5</b>
Silver Wristband	2	--
Cash	40	5
<b>Furs</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2</b>
Beaver	28	--
Water Rat	8	--
Marten/mink	12	1
Otter	1	1
<b>Food</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>
Indian Corn	6	6
Pease	12	1
Cranberries	2	1
Venison/Fish	3	--
Ortes (Skippels of) *	2	--
<b>Other</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>
Argratees (?)	3	--
Buckskin in future	1	--
Ashes	7	1
Aid/Service	5	2
Totals:	153 (88.5%)	19 (11.5%)

A skippel or schepel is a Dutch unit of measure of uncertain size. In Dutch, a schep is a scoop or shovel.

Source: Account Book of an Unidentified Mohawk Valley Trader, N-YHS.

---

<sup>22</sup> Richard Smith, A Tour of the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware in 1769, ed. by Francis W. Halsey (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., 1989), 114, 150.

The Iroquois who purchased goods from an unidentified Mohawk Valley trader during the late 1760s and early 1770s used cash more than any other commodity to pay for their purchases. Cash predominated as payment for both men and women, but a list of payments made by the Indian customers shows clear gender differences in the way the customers paid for goods. Women paid principally in cash and food products, while men paid most with furs and cash.

In 1764, Sally was still doing business with a Schenectady merchant, although perhaps not traveling there as regularly as before. Her account shows payments by cash via Mr. Fonda (perhaps Jelles Fonda, a well-known Mohawk Valley trader) and via Truman Schermerhorn, and is also credited with a number of furs, including marten, mink, musquash, otters, fishers, and foxes. She may have trapped these furs herself, but it seems just as likely that she received these furs in trade for liquor or the other items that she sold. As the decade of the 1760s advanced, Montour came to rely less heavily on cash, and more on an assortment of goods, taking advantage perhaps of whatever resources were handy.<sup>-3</sup>

In 1766, Schenectady traders Campbell and Andrews

---

<sup>-3</sup> Unidentified Account Book, Schenectady, 1761-1768, Daniel Campbell Papers, NYSL, Sally Monture Account, May 29, 1764 and June 29, 1764.

recorded in their Cash Book a credit to "Sally Montir" of "861 # Ganseng this includes the ...Barrel & Escepting some taken out -which as 39# which makes in all ...900." Ginseng periodically shows up as an item of trade in New York, although the market for ginseng was somewhat inconsistent. John Sanders, a Schenectady merchant devoted some effort to the ginseng trade in the early 1750s, not always a certain market. In 1754, he wrote to his contacts in London, "P.S. If you have sold my Jansing Roots please then to send me 300# Bohea Tea & 4# Green Tea," adding in his draft and then crossing out, "and if my Roots are not sold..." To collect the ginseng or "Roots," Sanders organized a system of sending goods "up" to trade. In this case, he sent the goods west along the Mohawk Valley. The recipient of the goods then used the consumer goods to trade locally for ginseng.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the people listed in Sanders' ginseng book had New York Dutch names although Sanders made a brief mention made of one transaction with "a Squa" for a small quantity of ginseng. On the last page of his account book, Sanders

---

<sup>24</sup> Chinese ginseng and North American ginseng, both species in the genus *Panax*, share a characteristic root and small green flower. Both are believed to have medicinal properties. Campbell and Andrews Cash Book, Schenectady, 1765-1766, May 8, 1766, Schenectady, Campbell Papers, NYSL; John Sanders Account Book (Ginseng) 1752, N-YHS; John Sanders Letterbook, 1749-1779, N-YHS, Letter to Messrs. Champion & Hayley, November 4, 1754.



made a list entitled "Memorandum of my Roots as follows viz" that included 15 names, two of which might be Iroquois names. Most of the people gave a few pounds of ginseng over for trade but a few people handed over large quantities, perhaps handling the ginseng found by others. When Sally Montour brought in 900 pounds of ginseng, she collected the fruits of other people's work, much as a fur trader amassed furs from individual trappers.

Indians did not gather all or even most of the ginseng. Neither did ginseng digging necessarily have to be a female occupation. More than one person on Sanders' list was a woman, but the women generally brought in small amounts of root. It is unclear how much of the actual digging of ginseng was women's work. Men certainly could have taken the monetary credit without doing the actual digging. The work of gathering the ginseng in the woods could have fallen to white men as an extension of their work, and to Indian women as an extension of theirs. As a collector of ginseng, Sally performed a task otherwise primarily undertaken by white men.<sup>25</sup>

Women used a small variety of goods in trade, especially in comparison to the articles traded by men. Women may have controlled what they selected to exchange,

---

<sup>25</sup> John Sanders Ginseng Book.

but also may have been limited by what this particular trader would take in exchange. Looking at the items used for purchases by women, more women used cash and corn than any other choices. Women pawned valuable items only once, while men pawned items on more than twenty occasions. Women apparently controlled some wampum belts, but either historians have been mistaken as to the nature of that control, or women considered the belts that they controlled too valuable to pawn. Men felt no similar compunction. It comes as no surprise that men used furs in trade, and that women only occasionally did. Sally Montour traded furs but dealt with more regularity in cash. The use of venison and fish in trade by the men likewise makes eminent sense. It is perhaps a little more surprising that men used corn and peas in trade. Women, according to a number of historians, had long controlled the crops.

The situation may have begun to change as early as the 1760s. David Fowler, a missionary among the Oneida in the 1760s wrote to Eleazer Wheelock in June of 1765, "I believe I shall Persuade all the Men in this Castle, at least the most of them to labour next year. They begin to see now that they would live better if they cultivated their Lands than they do now by Hunting and Fishing." A few years earlier, Samson Occum had no such influence with the Oneida. At that time, "faced with starvation," they, "were

preoccupied with the 'Pigeonhunt,' 'going-a-fishing,' and hunting deer." If the influence of white men had already succeeded in re-shaping some of the gendered division of labor, Iroquois men might then be able at least to some degree to make their own use of the crops. Corn, however, remained important to women as a trade item. The fact that men may have begun cultivating crops does not necessarily mean that women stopped. The society as a whole may have been working in agriculture.<sup>14</sup>

The trade in ashes likewise suggests the influence of white economic organization. Men traded ashes far more frequently than women. However, the biggest trader in ashes was not an Indian customer. The Mohawk Valley Trader listed an account under the name "Lewis the Frenchman." The Frenchman sold large quantities of ashes, bringing in 30, 32, 28 and 12 skippels of ashes over the course of one year. Other purchasers brought in much smaller quantities of ashes when they traded them. Lewis may well have been serving as

---

<sup>14</sup> Account Book of an Unidentified Mohawk Valley Trader (found in the papers of Jelles Fonda), N-YHS; Fowler quoted in Wm. Deloss Love, Samson Occum and the Christian Indians of New England (Boston, The Pilgrim Press, 1899), 110-111; Margaret Connell Szasz, "Samson Occum: Mohegan Spiritual Intermediary," in Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 65; For historians claiming that women controlled the white wampum belts see for instance, Martha Champion Randle, "Iroquois Women, Then and Now," in William Guy Spittal, ed., Iroquois Women: An Anthology (Oshwehen, ONT: Irocrafts, Ltd., 1990), 171.

an entrepreneur in this instance, collecting ashes from a number of people, perhaps some of whom were women.<sup>27</sup>

The collection and shipment of ashes involved men from the colonial power structure, perhaps limiting any role open to Iroquois women. During the same years of the early 1770s, an account book that featured many of William Johnson's tenants among its customers showed most of its credits being paid in ashes. Very little cash appeared in this account book, but customers paid with varying amounts of ashes and by freighting loads of ash and other goods to Caughnawaga and Albany. The unidentified keeper of this account book also kept an "Ashes book" suggesting some commitment to the product. The ashes likely faced conversion to potash, a useful trade item. In 1767, an agent for Connecticut wrote to his clients from London regarding the profitability of various commodities. "Potash," he wrote, "seems particularly to demand attention as this Commodity in no degree interferes with Great Britain and will certainly...be a permanent Branch of Trade."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Mohawk Valley Trader Accounts.

<sup>28</sup> Account Book of a General Store, 1771-1774 (identified incorrectly as being from Albany), NYSL; Martin, "Merchants and Traders of the Connecticut River Valley," 31; The Mohawk Valley trade in potash lasted at least until the late 1770s, when Jelles Fonda noted that he had "8 Barrels Potash purchased at Vandue." Jelles Fonda Memorandum Book of Cattle Bought, 1776-1778, Fonda Family Papers, NYSL.

In other areas, such as the Southeast, trade and contact with whites enhanced the need for traditional female economic activities. Among the Creeks, a brisk trade in deerskins meant that women's work expanded, from an emphasis primarily on the treatment of deerskins, although that remained critical, to sewing European-style clothing. Goods acquired by trade meant that work could be completed more quickly and perhaps more skillfully. Over time, the key to acceptance by local whites became the ability of the women to adapt to the colonial domestic structure. Some Indian groups succeeded better than others. In New England, the difference sometimes came down to families. Families that kept up Indian traditions were not well-accepted. Those that accepted white domestic and work habits sometimes came to be known as mulattoes. Those "good Indians" lost not only their way of life but their name.<sup>19</sup>

Women in New York, however, had not entirely lost their economic authority. Some women had their own accounts,

---

<sup>19</sup> Kathryn E. Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1810 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 124-130; Theda Perdue, "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood" in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1985) pp. 35-51; Donna Keith Baron, J. Edward Hood, and Holly V. Izard, "They Were Here All Along: The Native-American Presence in Lower-Central New England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 561-586, 572-573.

including the wives of Indian men, for instance, "Madalen Honjohanas Wife," or "Lydia wide-mouth Brants wife." Even if the traders did not leave many gaps open for Indian women to trade, they still retained their position relative to Iroquois men. Indeed, Iroquois men could make purchases only to have those purchases repudiated by their wives. The Mohawk Valley trader ran into trouble collecting payment because of "Cash paid Hendrick the Indian which his Wife would not allow at Setling." The dispute had less to do with the authority of the trader than the relationship between husband and wife. To circumvent the wife's displeasure, the trader here added the debit to the account of Hendrick's son Paulus. Iroquois customers in general were much more likely to contest a debt or a charge than white customers, or at least the trader was more likely to record the dispute. For instance, Hendrick and Yellow-belly both refused to approve purchases made by their sons on their fathers accounts. Disagreements of this nature never appear in the records for white customers.

Even as Sally Montour negotiated deals while trading for goods, she negotiated for other things that mattered to her. In 1762, a speaker at an Indian conference reporting on an incident when some young warriors got out of hand, stated that,

one Sarah Montour came from Fort Stanwix, with a

Barrel of wine, and desired a Meeting with all our Sachems, in order to get some Land from them for her Child (which she was desirous should be near the old Oneida Castle as thereby the English would be prevented from taking it) which being granted; she treated the Sachems with wine.

While the sachems were thus distracted the young men broke into a trader's and stole rum. This anecdote tells us quite a lot about Sarah Montour, but does little to clarify her tribal connections. She certainly was acquainted with the Oneida even perhaps well-acquainted, but the fact that they allowed her some land does not necessarily imply that they accepted her as anything more than a neighbor. The Oneida similarly gave land to a group of Indians from Long Island.<sup>30</sup>

The story highlights the fact that Montour could spare a barrel of wine from her normal operations to settle what must have been an important matter. Her trade in liquor yielded enough profit that she could spare both the cost of the full barrel, and whatever additional money she might have made from its sale. Had she traded extensively in other types of goods, those too might have served as gifts. This report also suggests the extent to which Montour entered directly into the Oneida power structure, using her

---

<sup>30</sup> Johnson Papers 10:481; Anthony Wonderly, "Montaukets Among the Brothertons in the Land of the Oneida, 1784-1830," unpublished paper presented at the 1997 Conference on New York History, Saratoga Springs, NY.

possessions and knowledge of diplomacy to obtain something dear to her heart: land for her son, outside of the grasp of whites.<sup>31</sup>

In 1767, Sarah Montour either expanded her operations or moved her base to Michilimackinac, residing for a time with the trader, William Maxwell. Montour's trading attracted the attention of other traders as well. Her itinerary perhaps included places that other traders could not easily get to. In June, Maxwell wrote to his friend and fellow trader William Edgar, "As to Saley's not visiting you yet I do not think it strange for according to her usual way of Traveling it's likely she will not be at your place before Fall." Early in September, Maxwell again wrote to Edgar regarding Montour's plans for trading, "I am obliged to you for the offer of goods for Salley but she is not thoroughly determined what to do. She is in some thoughts to send down the Country but if she would deal at Detroit as long as you would Sell as good and as cheap as others you might depend on my Interest for her Custom." Maxwell then went on to correct an overcharge for green tea that Edgar had made to Montour's account. Edgar likely got the message

---

<sup>31</sup> Whether her youngest son spent much time with her is subject to question. In 1764, one of Andrew Montour's sons, perhaps Nicholas, the youngest, spent 6 months and 11 days boarding with William Bowen. The bill for the child's board remained unpaid in 1770, when Bowen forwarded the bill to Sir William Johnson; Johnson Papers 7:1060.



that if he wanted Montour's business, he would have to come up with very good deals and square any earlier difficulties.<sup>32</sup>

Sally Montour's business continued to involve the trading of spirits and liquor in Michilimackinac. A man attempted to steal some rum, prompting a local resident to write to Guy Johnson, "I can prove the identity of the Keggs, some of them were suspected to belong to Sally Montour." Sally Montour and her business were familiar to a wide range of people in the trading world.<sup>33</sup>

By the spring of 1768, Maxwell and Montour had gone their separate ways. Once again writing to Edgar, Maxwell wrote,

I must tell you I am a Widower, Salley has Eloped from her Bed and Board, and lives in a House of her own: it would fill many Sheets to tell you all the Causes of such a Breach, but I will tell you the two larger and Spring of all the rest was Marriage or a Large Settlement, none of which seem'd to please me, till I was better convinced of her sincerity, I was willing to a Small Settlement for a year and in that Time if her Temper would please me I would have pleas'd her if I could but she would not trust me nor I her so she walked off and I did not hinder her for she had tired me hartily (I mean with her Tongue and her hands both).<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, Michilimackinac, June 29, 1767; Sept. 3, 1767, Edgar Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson Papers 12:357.

<sup>34</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, Michilimackinac, May 25, 1768, Edgar Papers.

The separation of Maxwell and Montour did not mean the end of their association however. In August, Maxwell once again wrote to Edgar on behalf of Montour, in this letter describing the repairs that she wished to have made to an assortment of silver ornaments. She apparently maintained her base in Michilimackinac at least through 1772, when Isaac Todd wrote to William Edgar that "Sally is not here at present."<sup>35</sup>

At the time of the Revolution, Sarah Montour moved to Detroit and continued trading. She returned to her original name, at least by the late 1780s, when account books list a few purchases by Sarah Ainse. Other Montour women stayed in New York and perhaps even took an active part in fighting the battle for the New York frontier. Sally continued trading and in Canada even carried on her struggle to permanently obtain some land.<sup>36</sup>

From this series of snapshot encounters, images accumulated through the brief mentions of Sarah Montour in the documentary record, we see a woman described variously

---

<sup>35</sup> Isaac Todd to William Edgar, Michilimackinac, May 27, 1772, Edgar Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Barbara Graymont, The Iroquois in the American Revolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 132, 188; Anthony F. C. Wallace, The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 138; DCB, 6:8; For an account of the later legal suits involving Sally Montour, then calling herself Ainse, see Kelsay, Joseph Brant, 544-545.

as financially irresponsible, "complaining," and sharp of tongue and temper. She traveled in her own way and on her own schedule. Merchants from Albany to Detroit knew her and tracked her activities with interest. She may have dealt with large quantities of goods, but she did not deal with large amounts of debt. Her transactions in Schenectady show that she paid for her purchases very shortly after claiming the goods. We also see a woman tirelessly looking after her own interests, both in negotiations with the Oneida and in negotiations with William Maxwell, as well as in her day to business dealings. Her interests were "self" interests, not determined by community, or even, apparently, by family.

Scattered throughout the life of Sarah Montour appear many moments of conflict, some small and passing, some looming large over her experiences. It is no coincidence that her encounters with white men, as recorded by them, often show Montour in contention with men, Indian and white. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they were in contention with her. Montour shaped her life in her own way, doing the work that she wanted, and not what others thought she ought to. In the process, she sometimes collided with the larger political systems of the colonies and provinces she dealt in. She did not always get her own way. Maintaining her independence meant being mobile, as well as assertive. She left Pennsylvania and moved to New

York, leaving the forts of New York for the trading posts and settlements of the Great Lakes, and eventually heading on to Canada.

Indian women who stayed in areas overwhelmed by white settlements could not live lives of their own choosing. Hannah Freeman, the "last" member of a family of Lenni-Lenape, lived a life of quiet misery, forced to depend on sewing and basket-making for a meager existence.<sup>37</sup> Montour, on the other hand, not only wasn't poor, she made money, keeping a good bit of her assets on hand in the form of silver jewelry, but also investing some of her cash in land.

Sally Montour was not alone among Indian women in her participation in the frontier commercial economy. She paid in cash, furs, and the occasional pair of leggings. Other Iroquois women used variations of these types of items to buy goods. Iroquois women used their particular skills to earn cash, and perhaps credit in an exchange of work for payment. Contact with Anglo-American settlers and traders and some engagement with the commercial economy of the colony formed an essential part of life for many Iroquois

---

<sup>37</sup> The maintaining of Indian culture depended also on the existence of other Indians. Hannah Freeman, a Lenape woman who lived for years among whites in Pennsylvania lived in a way "identical to that of unmarried women of European descent." Marshall J. Becker, "Hannah Freeman: An Eighteenth-Century Lenape Living and Working Among Colonial Farmers," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 114(1990): 249-269.

women, of various tribes.

Work shaped the identity of an Iroquois woman, no less than the life of a white woman or a black woman. June Namias suggests of Mary Jemison "that she became an Indian woman by learning to work in Seneca society." Through work, and by performing the assigned tasks, Iroquois captives became Iroquois. Indian and white societies both saw that if a person did the wrong work, in the wrong way, that he or she could not fit in. This by no means should imply that the Iroquois themselves never changed. We could expand our discussion of the work and economic role of Iroquois women if we look beyond the tasks that are typically considered to have been the work of women. The same three paragraphs summing up the work of Iroquois women, using the same two or three sources, have been written many times by historians. Mary Jemison's story provides one of the few accounts of life for a woman among the Iroquois in the latter half of the eighteenth-century and the two paragraphs of her work experiences as an Indian woman have been cited and paraphrased repeatedly.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Namias, White Captives, 182; James E. Seaver ed., A Narrative of The Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 31-32; See James Axtell, The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 155; Elizabeth Tooker, "Women in Iroquois Society," in William Guy Spittal, ed., Iroquois Women: An Anthology (Oshwehen, ONT: Irocrafts, Ltd., 1990), 199-216; and Judith

The part of Jemison's story that has attracted little attention were her interactions, limited though they may have been, with white settlers and traders living near her in the Genessee Valley. The part of her economic life that included her visits to the mill and her working for wages at a nearby farm have not been considered pertinent for generalizing about Iroquois women. Interactions with colonists contributed to reshaping the work experiences of Indian women but these work experiences did not automatically serve to change or downgrade the economic independence of Indian women relative to their own culture. We cannot assume that because Indian women sold brooms they had made, for instance, to white people that they were becoming more like the whites or losing their cultural identity. Sauk women increased their production of particular items, such as maple sugar and decorative mats, in response to the demands of white commerce but did not give up other aspects of their "traditional" lives. Among the Creek, the deerskin trade demanded more production of prepared deerskins by women, even as the trade demanded more hunting by men. This level of trade did not restructure the Indians' cultural attitudes towards work or the role of

---

K. Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women Among the Iroquois," in Spittal ed., Iroquois Women, 189, for examples of scholars using the Mary Jemison paragraphs.

women in Native American society.<sup>39</sup>

In February of 1759, William Johnson noted in his account of Indian Expenses, the payment of cash to a Cayuga woman for "3 pr Indn Shoes." In March of the same year, he purchased 8 pairs of Indian Shoes from 2 Onondaga women "@4/." These transactions, and others involving such skills as dressing skins, illustrate the extent to which Iroquois women took part in the more generalized system of trade, interchanging the products of their customary labor for goods, services, and cash on the New York frontier.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, by the middle of the eighteenth century (and likely much sooner) Indian women could separate out tasks that they had long performed for their families and use these for their own economic purposes. More importantly, interactions between Iroquois women and the commercial world of the British Empire extended beyond the bounds of the fur trade into a consumer trade based largely on cash.<sup>41</sup>

The women who bought things from the Mohawk Valley

---

<sup>39</sup> Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, "Autonomy and the Economic Roles of Indian Women of the Fox-Wisconsin Riverway Region, 1763-1832," in Shoemaker, Negotiators of Change, 72-89, 78-79; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 124-125.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson Papers, 3:157, 162; His accounts do not specify exactly who he owed payment for "208 pr Ind[ian] Shoes for the Warriors at 4/" purchased in April, 1759. Other Iroquois women were paid for "a pr Snow Shoes," and "for a Gun of her deceased husband," 3:164, 159, 157.

<sup>41</sup> Richard White, The Middle Ground, 94 .

Trader in the 1770s had little opportunity to exchange products that earlier had proved useful. This account book showed no trace of women trading treated skins, or Indian shoes, products that twenty years before had been in demand by William Johnson among others. In fact, "Madalen Honjohanas Wife" bought a pair of Indian shoes from the trader. Likewise, we see no trace of such items as brooms or baskets, goods frequently associated with Indian women in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. By the early 1770s, Iroquois women may have lost some of their economic independence relative to the white trade. During the Revolution, Mary Jemison, for instance, relied on wage labor for a neighbor to supplement her living. Sally Montour had already left New York, perhaps because of diminishing opportunities for trade.<sup>42</sup>

By the late 1760s, it was unusual for women of the Iroquois tribes to shop in white stores in Albany and Schenectady. The accounts of an unidentified trader of the Mohawk Valley contain the names of just over 75 customers, all but ten or so being the names of Indians. Besides the Indians, identified sometimes as members of various tribes

---

<sup>42</sup> Becker, "Hannah Freeman," 252; Baron et al., "They Were Here All Along," 574; Daniel R. Mandell, Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 199-201; Seaver, Mary Jemison, 59.



such as Cayuga or Seneca, the book includes mention of several Negro slaves and a few white settlers. The records make no mention of the location of a shop or store. If these accounts are those of Jelles Fonda, then he may have encountered his customers as he traveled around the Mohawk Valley, perhaps carrying a bag of goods with him. His Iroquois customers may have received him in their homes, rather than traveling any distance to his place. On the other hand, perhaps these numerous Indian customers made their way singly to him, selecting their merchandise at his house. The variety of Indian tribes represented by the names in the book depict a Mohawk Valley of mixed Iroquois cultures, Indians of different backgrounds, either living near or with each other. Some of these people may have been traveling through, but they must have known the trader well-enough for him to trade with them, usually extending some small amount of credit.

Mary Brant's consumer history shows a very different set of interactions with the white commercial world. She lived in a house built by a white man, and bought goods from nearby storeholders. A Mohawk, she became the second, albeit unofficial, wife of William Johnson while in her early twenties, moving to Fort Johnson sometime around 1759. They were not married according to English law, a distinction that he recognized in his will referring to her

as his "House Keeper." They had several children, largely brought up at Johnson Hall. Her influence among the Mohawks has been widely acknowledged in the historical literature while her character and position have been romanticized, even mythologized. Eighteenth-century observer Anne Grant described her years later, never having met her, as "an Indian maiden, daughter to a sachem, who possessed and uncommonly agreeable person, and good understanding." Her presence certainly is noted in William Johnson's papers. Numerous people sent her their greetings, she is thanked for her hospitality. Her son sends his love, as does her brother, Joseph Brant. But, by and large, there are few explicit comments about her in the fourteen published volumes of papers.<sup>43</sup>

Brant seems to have come into her own, politically speaking, only after the death of Sir William and the coming of the Revolution. For the years before the Revolution, we know roughly when her children were born, and we know she had her own room with her own things in the room, things not inventoried with Sir William's estate. We know she authorized purchases from local merchants, in Schenectady

---

<sup>43</sup> Anne MacVicar Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of manners and Scenes in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972, originally published 1901), II:16; Johnson Papers, for instance 4:501; 7:409; 12:1063-64; DCB 4:416-419, "Konwatsi'tsiaienni (Mary Brant)."

and Johnstown. We do not know much else definitively from this time. If we stick with the evidence from the period, can we understand anything about her economic place in the world? She, after all, was a Mohawk, living with a white colonist who made much of his role as the conduit between the Crown and the Iroquois. Johnson was British but savored his Indian connections. Molly Brant occupied a special, perhaps a unique, position, one created by the convergence of her personal interests with the politics of the day. Unlike Sally Montour who devised her situation in the wake of conflicts between her personal business and representatives of various governments, and unlike the silent(in the historical record) customers of the Mohawk Valley Trader, Molly Brant successfully bolstered her private concerns with activities in the public arena.<sup>44</sup>

Most of the account book entries that mention Mary Brant date from the late 1760s. By this time, we have seen that many of the New York Iroquois functioned in close contact with the local white economy. Brant lived in a white man's house, but a white man who prided himself on both his urbanity and his connections to the Indian world,

---

<sup>44</sup> Johnson Papers, 13:647("Mary Brants Room"); Graymont, Iroquois in the American Revolution, 158-159; Lois M. Feister and Bonnie Pulis, "Molly Brant: Her Domestic and Political Roles in Eighteenth-Century New York," in Robert Grumet ed., Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp. 295-320.

decorating his house with the latest fashions from London as well as mementos from his Indian friends. Her life reflects ties to both of these worlds. Sir William owned a number of slaves. Historians have speculated that the slaves did the housework. We know from studies of southern women that directing other people to do housework, (especially when they don't really want to do it) took a specific set of skills, but we can not say with our evidence whether Brant actually performed this task. We also can not say for instance whether Mrs. Molly (as she is called by John Butler, for instance) actually cooked, but we do know that she is the one that was thanked for breakfast by a visitor. She certainly had the ability to authorize expenditures for visiting Indians, such as in 1770 when she authorized William Fox to provide five Indians with bowls of punch, rum, victuals and pasture for their horses. She carried a "Privet account" with John Butler, buying butter and borrowing cash.<sup>45</sup>

Brant's personal autonomy extended beyond the bounds of the house where she had her own room and her own things, to at least some of her dealings with area merchants. Was this

---

<sup>45</sup> For Johnson's interest in Indian material culture, see Wanda Burch, "Sir William Johnson's Cabinet of Curiosities," New York History 71(1990):261-282; Johnson Papers, 7:865; John Butler Accounts, Account of Sir William Johnson, 1764-1771.

more authority than we see in white women's accounts? There are no other cases where a merchant specified that a married women had a private account. William Johnson's accounts included many items purchased for and by the authority of many people. The fact that Brant and Johnson technically were not married may have given her more autonomy in the eyes of local vendors. Taken in combination with Johnson's prestige, these circumstance enhanced Brant's status with retailers. Brant's authority and recognition by William Johnson's acquaintances depended perhaps on the fact that she did not openly challenge the assumptions about gender of Johnson and his Anglo-American friends. Neither did she offend the Iroquois who came to visit.

In her cross-cultural existence, Molly Brant dealt with white traders, while maintaining her own identity as a Mohawk woman. Even though she bought Anglo-American consumer goods in white retail establishments, she preserved both her authority and her singularity. A glimpse of how she achieved this balance can be seen in the evidence of her purchases of fabric and sewing "notions." This analysis looks only at those items that specify that they were purchased per Brant's authority. Many white colonial women spent a fair amount of their time and energy sewing. William Johnson's white daughters, according to Anne Grant, spent hours, even years, doing beautiful hand-sewing and

little else.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps we can decide whether Brant sewed, and what she sewed. This question of clothing and whether Brant sewed taps into a number of important discussions about women's work, material culture and New York in the eighteenth century. Why is it important that Molly Brant sewed? In part, because her sewing illustrates how European or English materials served Brant's own ends. The use of English fabrics and items to create a distinctively Iroquoian material culture suggests that trade goods in and of themselves did not destroy Indian culture.

Eighteenth-century people clearly connected a person's personal appearance with that person's status and power. What someone wore said a lot about how they should be treated. Brant has been described as always wearing Indian dress. What did that mean in terms of articles of clothing? Richard Smith, a late eighteenth-century traveller, wrote that among the various Indians that he had met, "Cloathing they use but little, sometimes a Shirt or Shift with a Blanket or Coat, a Half-gown or Petticoat, and sometimes the latter only without Linen. Woolen Boots and Leather Moccisons compleat the Dress of the common sort." This description accords well with the dress of Oneidas and Senecas pictured in a series of early nineteenth century

---

<sup>46</sup> Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, II:17.

sketches. In the sketches, some of the women wear long skirts with blankets or other cloth wrapped around their shoulders. Other women wear the blanket and leggings with no visible skirt. Although constructed of imported materials, this manner of dress clearly did not mimic the dress of white women, remaining distinctively Indian.<sup>47</sup>

Most of what Molly Brant purchased at local stores consisted of sewing supplies, that is yard goods, thread, and decorations. In comparison to white women in Albany and Schenectady, Molly bought more yards of fabric per visit, rarely purchasing less than 3 yards of material. The material she purchased was almost always colored or patterned in some way. Between 1768 and 1773, she purchased, among other things, "5 yds Check," "10 1/2 yds blue Callamancoe," "9 yds of Pink durant," 3 yards of "Strip'd Holland," and 4 of "pensil'd Linnen." Unlike those white purchasers, Molly also bought yards, rolls, and pieces of "broad ribbond," some of it red, "strip'd gartering," and "broad white tape," all items that featured largely in

---

<sup>47</sup> Gretchen Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant, and their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation," Ontario History 81(1989): 235-250; Smith, Tour of the Hudson, 149-150; Timothy J. Shannon discusses the mixture of clothing that Indians and whites adopted. "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996):13-42; For the drawings, see Wallace, The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca, illustrations following p. 142.

the Indian trade, and in Indian dress.<sup>48</sup>

Mary Jemison stated that it was not until later in her life that she began to sew her clothes. "Spinning, weaving sewing, stocking knitting, and the like are arts which have never been practiced in the Indian tribes generally," she told her interviewer. Yet most of the trade goods that interested the Iroquois and other groups in the eighteenth century were fabrics. Among the Creek, "[u]sing their new needles, thimbles, and scissors, Creek women became adept at fashioning the imported textiles into European style clothing." Sewing did not remain a foreign skill, and Iroquois women did some sewing already when they embroidered or decorated moccasins and belts. Much of what Mary Brant bought could be used in the fashioning of Indian style clothing, which although influenced by European materials, nevertheless remained distinctly Indian. Mary Jemison's experiences suggest however that sewing was not universal among Iroquois women. Her experiences among the Seneca may not mirror the experiences of Mohawk women. Brant's consumer life likewise was not representative of the women who bought from the unidentified Mohawk Valley Trader.<sup>49</sup>

Dressing in the Indian style likewise extended beyond

---

<sup>48</sup> Robert Adams Accounts in Johnson Papers, 13:533-615.

<sup>49</sup> Seaver, Mary Jemison, 31-32; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 124; Johnson Papers, 13: 610, 573.



the styling of fabric to the use of jewelry of various types for personal ornamentation. Brant purchased a pair of "Stone ear bobs Sett in Gold" in 1773, as well as authorizing the purchase of "a Necklace & Ear Bobs to a Squaw," in 1770. Gold may have been beyond the means, or outside the taste, of many Indians. In his journal, Smith noted that many Indian women bedecked themselves with silver brooches, which also passed for money among them. Sally Montour owned a wide array of silver ornaments, for wearing in her hair, ears, and on her person. A list of items to be mended for her in 1768 included "a long hair plate...a wristband...a Brasplate...a Moon...some giging bobs...9 Broaches(old)." Along with very precise directions for repairing the pieces, she included "some broken silver to mend them."<sup>50</sup>

Some purchased items suggest the boundaries of Brant's involvement with household affairs. She purchased tea once, tea cups another time, ordered brown sugar via a surrogate on another occasion, and bought a frying pan and iron skillet. None of this shows any particular engagement with the duties expected of a white housewife. Despite her involvement in Anglo-American society, Molly Brant did not

---

<sup>50</sup> Smith, Tour of the Hudson, 134-135, 150; William Maxwell to William Edgar, Michilimakinac, Aug. 14, 1768, Edgar Papers.

give up her cultural independence for the existence of a white woman.<sup>51</sup>

Many of the items bought by Molly Brant, and by other Indian women, were small items. The purchase of "3 Ells Ribbond" or "2 1/2 Ells of Black Stroud" perhaps seem trivial. Although the purchase of "10 Ells Gimp" as opposed to three might be a larger purchase, it does not clearly have more significance than a smaller one. We have no way of knowing whether the ten ells was intended for division among several people or whether one person had a large project in mind. The presents given by William Johnson, and the items requested for trade consisted largely of clothing or haberdashery items, guns, knives, and things that could be carried easily. No matter how intense the trade, Indians never accumulated the numbers of items that whites seemed to need, nor did they seem to need sets of things. However, by the early 1770s, the purchase of goods such as teapots, fragile at best, was not uncommon.

Satisfaction counted on both sides of a trade. In the Great Lakes region, Indians shaped the trade by demanding goods of particular quality and type. In New York, the

---

<sup>51</sup> Johnson Papers, 13:603, 608-609, 543, 597; Feister and Pulis raise the possibility that after Sir William's death, that Molly Brant added to her income by selling rum to other Indians and may have become newly assertive, "Molly Brant," 306-307.

Iroquois likewise bought what they preferred. A seller, however, is limited by what he or she can take from a buyer and pass along in the next cycle of trading. For Iroquois women, the range of goods and services useful for trade shrank during the 1760s and 1770s, reducing their overall flexibility and making Canada look more attractive as a place to go.<sup>52</sup>

Inceasingly, the Mohawk Valley of the third quarter of the eighteenth century faced stress from the contact between the Native American inhabitants and the white settlers arriving in ever larger numbers. Some of this stress related directly to problems of gender. The treaty of 1764 had cost the Iroquois large portions of land, essentially leaving them behind the line claimed by the Crown and its representatives. When Indians and whites attempted to live in proximity to each other, trouble sometimes followed, whether it came between soldiers and nearby Indians, or settlers and nearby castles or villages. William Johnson wrote to Cadwalader Colden in 1764 about Indian complaints in Canajoharie,

In short several of the White People in that Neighborhood use them vastly Ill, by turning their

---

<sup>52</sup> White, Middle Ground, 132, 130; Arthur Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Pres, 1980), 257.

Cattle into the Indians Cornfields and beat their Women and Children when Driveing them out, this has been often done but more so of late in the absence of their Young Men.

The whites making the attack clearly took advantage of the perceived weakness of women and children, but the choice of where to harass the women and children and under what circumstances points directly to women's agricultural work as a source of stress between the two cultures. The apparent autonomy of the Indian women, on their own, without men, irritated local whites.<sup>53</sup>

The trouble did not always go only one way. Problems could erupt in any number of situations where whites and Indians did not understand each. Hendrick Frey wrote to William Johnson for help in 1763 again from Canajoharie. "Sir," he wrote,

The bearer hereof Mrs Abell applyd to me Yesterday Complaining of her mad husband Signefying she fear'd her Life, and yt he harbours of Numbers of Sinneca Indians in his house and instead of her, keeps his old Bedfellow, haveing taken his wifes Bed and gave it to the Squa, she tells me he has Disbandon'd all from the house that are of white Couller and only Suffers a few Nigroes to Stay and that he takes Loaded arms Every night Into his bead, Last night Gisbert Van Alstyne went to the house and Enquired for his Brother Cobes, he immediately took a hatchet and Struck it into the door Post calling the Indians, upon which Van Alstyne Verry Briskly engaged his Slay and Run Off; tells me Under the Pains of Death, as it might likely Create Disturbance to be doing any thing for the Woman During the Indians being there

---

<sup>53</sup> Johnson Papers, 4:514.

I advis'd her to make Application to you.  
Because John Abeel would not allow his white wife to occupy her proper place (house and bed), he was mad, as in insane. Even more to the point, to defend his decision he felt compelled to resort to violence. The upset of the expected white domestic situation led to more than one violent encounter. Abeel did not want to be white and getting rid of the white domestic household formed a key part of his break.<sup>54</sup>

These two incidents draw attention to aggressive encounters that arose in part because of different cultures but specifically because of problems innate in reconciling two differently gendered economies. Given the proximity of the cultures and the requirements of the overbearing Anglo-American culture, it is little wonder that when many Iroquois joined with the Loyalists to fight the colonials, that the principal targets were houses, the heart of colonial domestic economy. And it should be no surprise that in 1779, when General Sullivan marched through western New York, that his primary targets were the cornfields of the Iroquois. Underlying much of the tension between the societies was a large rift in the expectations about the

---

<sup>54</sup> Johnson Papers, 13:321-322.

power of women, particularly the economic power of women.<sup>55</sup>

No group perhaps encountered more stresses and challenges in New York than Iroquois women during the mid-eighteenth century. The wars that occurred in New York, along with the recurring epidemics subjected the lives and work of Iroquois women to constant difficulties. The switch from hunting to war, back to hunting, was a familiar one to Iroquois men and one that they apparently welcomed. The burning of a village and its corn crops, on the other hand, seriously affected the lives of Indian women. The responsibility for providing food did not change, even though the corn was gone. Women therefore needed a certain flexibility in their habits and the capability of finding a means to fit their work into whatever gaps they could find in the encroaching white economy. To make matters more difficult, the colonial commercial economy did not stay the same. Even over thirty years, the structure of the local market shifted. People too, changed. Long time contacts died and new connections needed to be made. One generation of Iroquois women then faced quite a different set of ground

---

<sup>55</sup> For an important discussion of the importance of Indian corn to loyalists and Indians during the American Revolution, see Colin G. Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 5; Sullivan and his troops were surprised by the size and quality of the cornfields that they encountered.

rules than the next. Circumstances that ruled during the 1740s were not the same as the circumstances of the 1760s. It took ingenuity indeed for Iroquois women to obtain food and the items they desired in trade, especially as their agricultural work became a more frequent target of aggression.

The conditions brought on by the American Revolution made life in New York untenable for many local Iroquois.<sup>56</sup> Molly Brant left the Mohawk Valley for Canada early in the war, living largely under the umbrella of the British Army, her personal finances increasingly intertwined with the fortunes of the British government. Her family expenses in 1780 showed charges paid for "silk to make Calashes for [her children]" as well as payments to "the Mantua maker" and "the Shoemaker." With her primary economic connections to British society, Brant dressed her children increasingly like Anglo-Canadians by no means, sewed all their clothing. Her children, half white themselves, did not encounter whites, as their mother had, rather they lived in and among white Canadian society.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> James Merrell draws attention to the increasing gap or "fault line" between whites and Indians during this period, "Reading Andrew Montour," 34.

<sup>57</sup> A calash was a kind of bonnet, fashionable both before and after the Revolution. For more on the acculturation of Brant's children see Green, "Molly Brant, Catharine Brant, and their Children," 241-242; Sir Frederick Haldimand

Sally Montour journeyed throughout the province of New York and, later, through parts of what is now Michigan and Canada on her trading forays. She bought goods in retail stores in white settlements, as well as buying and selling in forts and trading posts. Unfortunately, the records do not reveal the precise nature of her trade, but at least some of her customers were white traders. Most of Mary Brant's recorded purchases took place at stores in the Mohawk Valley. There is, of course, no way of tracking down any of the more informal trades which undoubtedly took place. These encounters were not occasional disconnected meetings, but reveal a pattern of commercial activity. Montour and Brant never were absorbed into white society, but the economy of the frontier clearly embraced them.

---

Papers, NAC, B114, p. 204, Extract from Col Claus accompt against Col Guy Johnson, July, 1781.



## Chapter 5.

### Women and Consumption on the Eve of the Revolution

The freedom to choose items for purchase constituted a real, though finite, power for women in eighteenth-century New York. The items that women bought reflected their work and their interests, The control over money, goods, or work, even in small quantities, gave women a legitimate role in the growing consumer economy of the mid-1700s, exposing at the same time the limits of their economic reach. This chapter explores the dimensions of white women's roles as consumers in the years preceding the American Revolution, years defined by historians as fostering a consumer revolution and paving the way for political revolutions. Women's activities as consumers, although later politicized by revolutionaries and historians alike, here tie closely to domestic work, life-cycle, and of course, relative wealth. Women generally comprised a relatively small percentage of purchasers in stores in the years before the revolution, at least of those who bought from male merchants. The purchases that women made indicate the commonly-held interests of a shared identity offset by the effects of

individual life experiences.<sup>2</sup>

The consumer revolution of the eighteenth century was not a single event, nor did it mark a single shift in the attitude of consumers towards goods and purchases. A chronicle of this economic transformation reveals the dynamic between people, their work, and their material culture. Women and their work, for instance, have long been closely identified with the goods of their households. The relationship did not exist in stasis, however. Access to an increasing array of consumer merchandise affected both what women bought and how they used those purchases. While the things bought by men could have been for anyone in their household, the articles purchased by women almost certainly reflect women's own priorities. Historian Laurel Ulrich argues that particular possessions of women can be "an index to the shifting sources of female identity." Items purchased by women similarly hold a key to understanding the

---

<sup>2</sup> In "A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660-1740," Journal of British Studies 25(1986): 131-156, Lorna Weatherill describes differences in male and female consumer habits in England; The relatively limited appearance of women in men's account books prior to the Revolution suggests that the growth in importance of women consumers by the nineteenth century may have been triggered by events related to the American Revolution. Specifically, efforts to bring women on board as active supporters of the revolutionary cause, by appealing to them as consumers, may have served to openly associate women with consumption, thereby alienating men from the task of household shopping.

dynamics of women's work and identity in colonial America.<sup>2</sup>

Colonial women learned to use the expanding retailing system to further their own interests and needs. Purchases by local women highlight the ambiguity of production and consumption, especially in the context of specific women and groups of women within the community. Which goods after all were consumed, and which used to produce other goods? If one bought cloth was one consuming imported material or buying a raw material for producing a utilitarian piece of clothing? Historian Elizabeth Mancke notes that in Nova Scotia, during a slightly later period, the purchases of women from local shopkeepers by and large related to home production. Women in Nova Scotia bought goods that required more labor to make a completed commodity. Men, on the other hand tended to buy things that were already finished, such

---

- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Hannah Barnard's Cupboard: Female Property and Identity in Eighteenth-Century New England," in Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Frederika J. Teute eds., Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp.238-273; Also see the work of Barbara Maclean Ward, "Women's Property and Family Continuity in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut," in Peter Benes, ed., The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1987, Early American Probate Inventories (Boston: Boston University, 1989), pp. 74-85 and David E. Narrett, Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 152-160 for discussions of the important connection of women to moveable property.

as tools.<sup>3</sup>

Historian Ann Smart Martin interprets evidence from Virginia somewhat differently, seeing the home production of spun thread and yarn as the means to an end, that is the purchase of desirable imported goods. In Virginia, she says, "our notion of home production is put on its head; not self-sufficiency, but consumerism drove those [spinning] wheels." The products of household labor bought the goods, but Martin does not see those purchases as furthering domestic work, rather the impetus to produce came from outside the domestic hearth.<sup>4</sup>

In New York, the purchases of women share properties of both of these scenarios. Certainly, one of the reasons that women made wampum or sewed for a local merchant was to participate more fully as consumers. The goods used in the manufacture of these products, however, were not purchased from the merchants although the merchants did supply the fabric for making shirts. Women rarely bought tools that

---

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Mancke, "At the Counter of the General Store: Women and the Economy in Eighteenth-Century Horton, Nova Scotia," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995) pp. 167-181.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Smart Martin, "Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade from London to the Virginia Frontier," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1993), 313.

would help them produce other items for exchange. The purchase of imported grocery items, for instance, can only loosely be considered important to home production or manufacturing, and there is no sign that women exchanged baked goods made with imported ingredients for other consumer items. The goods that women bought from retailers related to home production in the sense that they bought fabric and notions intended for articles of clothing. This sewing constituted recreation as much as it did work, and the frequencies of these purchases attest to their overall importance to the women consumers. The extent to which we can describe the life-history of a purchased item is the extent to which we can understand the intertwining of consumer goods and the household economy, and thus women's identity as consumers and producers in the commercial world.<sup>5</sup>

Shopping and the goods purchased served different purposes for different women. Several factors determined what a woman bought at a retail store, including her socio-economic status, her marital situation, her age, and the

---

<sup>5</sup> In this discussion, I generally follow Ann Smart Martin in her use of the terms, consumerism and consumption. She distinguishes between the two terms, noting that "consumerism" is the broader field of studying all aspects of being a consumer, while "consumption" refers specifically to the act of buying and using. "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," Winterthur Portfolio 28(1993): 141-158, 142-143.

larger circumstances of time and space, as well as factors inherent to the market such as accessibility and fashion. Women did not form a single, coherent consumer group, but instead bought goods that served their own particular interests, interests that only sometimes overlapped with those of other women. These interests did not duplicate those of men, even of husbands, but served the purposes of the women. The records kept by Robert Sanders, Samuel Tys, and other merchants allow us to consider the impact of a number of these social categories on the ways that women participated in and reacted to the explosion of consumer goods in the mid-eighteenth century.

Provincial New York, especially Dutch New York, scarcely seems closely linked to English fashion. The Dutch heritage moderated the influence of the English on the communities of Albany and Schenectady, at least for a while. Visitors to the Hudson-Mohawk area sometimes commented on the old-fashioned style of the inhabitants, even as late as the 1790s. William Strickland, a late eighteenth-century visitor, described women as "perfect copies of their ancestors, or the modern inhabitants of...Holland; they wear a long blue cloak extending to the ground, and a close bonnet...Exactly such figures may be seen in old Dutch paintings." Houses and furniture also retained the

influence of Dutch traditions.<sup>6</sup>

During the late 1750s and 1760s, Albany began increasingly to feel the influence of the British at close range, due particularly to the stationing of officers, soldiers and various other personnel in and around the city during the Seven Years' War. The residents of Albany maintained close commercial ties to New York, which in turn felt the influence of London. The province of New York was increasingly swayed by the British in many realms, social as well as material.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of British ideas of fashion show up in

---

<sup>6</sup> For discussions of the continuing influence of Dutch culture on New Yorkers see the essays in Roderic H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelley, eds., New World Dutch Studies: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America, 1609-1776, (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1987) and Roderic H. Blackburn and Ruth Piwonka, eds., Remembrance of Patria: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America, 1609-1776 (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1988), Strickland quoted on p. 200.

<sup>7</sup> The anglicization of Dutch New York has provided a focus for a wide variety of historical studies. See for instance David E. Narrett, Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), Joyce D. Goodfriend, Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), and Linda Briggs Biemer, Women and Property in Colonial New York: The Transition from Dutch to English Law, 1643-1727 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983). Patricia U. Bonomi has argued instead that the many cultures of New York, while not the source of, contributed in part to its factional politics throughout the eighteenth century in A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

Albany records of the mid-1700s. One New Yorker writing to an Albany friend in 1757, despaired of the army's chances in the Seven Years' War and suggested that fashionable women could do a better job,

It's a pity that some Men did not do as much Execution with their Swords as women do with their fans with which they Run thro' their Exercises & Conquer possibly a Regiment in One Hour, by Handling their fans, Unfurling their fans, Discharging their fans, Grounding their fans, Recovering their fans, fluttering their fans &c: And all that with the most polite grace."

References to the sale of stylish shoes such as "channel poms," and "Womens Dancing Gloves For his Sister" reflect British styles of dress, as well as hinting at the active social scene in Albany. Eighteenth-century observer Anne Grant commented on the immediate impact of British entertainments brought by incoming officers to conservative Dutch Albany. Dutch parents frowned on their children's new interests in fashion and other frivolities. Twenty miles inland, Schenectady account books contain fewer references to things notably fashionable, and with the notable exception of playing cards, few, if any, suggestions of smart diversions."

---

" Christopher Banker to Robert Leake at Albany, Sept. 2, 1757, DePeyster Family Papers, NYSL.

" Account Book of an Unidentified Albany Retail Merchant, 1761-1764, NYSL. See, for instance, purchases on January 14 and 29, 1764. Tavernkeepers, such as Gilbert Tice, and traders going to the forts regularly purchased playing cards



Fashion dictated, or at least suggested, to the consumer what he or she should buy, and what a retailer should sell. Other factors also contributed to what a customer bought. In colonial North America, the purchases of residents not only conformed to fashion, but to the demands of the everyday life. Women (and men) bought goods under cultural guidelines of fashion and social position, guidelines that reinforced the status of the shopper. In many ways shopping served the purposes of conformity. Paradoxically, the purchases of women betray as well the individuality of the consumers and the singularity of their life experiences.

When Elizabeth Sanders and her husband sold goods in the early 1750s, purchases by women and men reflected to some extent the needs of domestic production. Retailers

---

from Samuel Tyms of Schenectady and the Albany Retail Merchant; Anne MacVicar Grant discusses the reactions she witnessed to an increasing British presence, Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of manners and Scenes in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972, originally published 1901), II: 17; New York was not alone in witnessing an increasing anglicization of goods and behaviors. See for instance, T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," Journal of British Studies 25(1986): 467-499 and Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Neil McKendrick recounts the powerful connections between fashion and consumerism in "The Commercialization of Fashion," in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 34-99.

addressed the established needs of women and households. Women, primarily but not exclusively widows, bought goods that supported the domestic work of a household, such as nails for building and repairs, a scythe for harvesting grain, indigo for dying cloth, cards for preparing fleece for spinning, and kegs to be used for storage.

The accounts of various merchants in the Albany and Schenectady area show subtle changes in the types of items purchased by women between 1750 or so and 1765. By far most of the items purchased by women in the Hudson-Mohawk area related to dress and personal appearance. However, the exact nature of what women bought shifted over the years. Items produced and exported by England, grew rapidly in number and variety. Fabric provides a compelling examples of the growing diversity of choices. Colonial newspaper advertisements for retailers list enormous selections of fabric styles and types. Eighteenth-century account books from Albany and Schenectady show customers buying a very large variety of fabric. In 1763, Samuel Tyms sold more than 20 types of fabric to women, and of a considerably different assortment than did Elizabeth Sanders during the 1750s or her husband in 1749/50.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Tyms sold 20 kinds of fabric in a single year, 1763. Elizabeth Sanders sold 12 of those types during the years she sold goods while her husband sold only seven of those styles. Samuel Tyms Day Book, Schenectady, 1762-1768

Cotton shaped the fabric trade in the 1750s as well as the 1760s, but the domination of the market by cotton was considerably more advanced in the 1760s, limiting consumer interest in not just woolens, but also steering some purchasers away from linens. In some cases in England, woolen materials were driven entirely from the market by the prettier cottons. This did not occur to the same extent in the American colonies, perhaps because of the American climate.<sup>22</sup>

The switch from woolen to cotton fabrics in the mid-eighteenth century is linked to a drop in consumer purchases of some products related to home textile production, which had a direct effect on the daily work of women. However, the embargoes and tariffs of the years leading up to the American Revolution from the late 1760s saw a resurgence of interest in local production, again marking a shift in the way women of various life-stages allocated their time.<sup>23</sup>

---

(Blot Book), Campbell Family Papers, NYSL; Mrs. Robert Sanders Account Book, Albany, 1753-1764[hereafter ESS Accounts], N-YHS.

<sup>22</sup> Beverly Lemire, Fashion's Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800 (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), ch. 3.

<sup>23</sup> For an analysis of the importance of female involvement in the textile trades in New England, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth-Century New England," WMO 3rd Ser. 55(1998): 1-38.

Very little evidence exists for Albany and Schenectady that would suggest that women in the Hudson-Mohawk area collectively spent much time weaving cloth. Some weaving did occur in Albany, often by men, and one of Elizabeth Sanders' customers did weave cloth for her. Accounts of the late 1750s and early 1760s show infrequent references to local weaving, although certainly some occurred. The late 1760s and early 1770s show an upsurge in the local production of textiles, as references to the tools of cloth production once again appear in local account books. Local people used homespun linen for basic items of clothing such as shifts and shorrtgowns, as well as for household items such as sheets and towels. Exterior clothing and such decorative items as bedhangings seem largely to have been made from imported fabric.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Stefan Bielski, "How a City Worked: Occupations in Colonial Albany," in A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers edited by Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany, NY: New Netherland Publishing, 1991) pp. 119-136, 127; Cornelia H. Frisbee Houde, "Not Just Another Pretty Dress," in A Beautiful and Fruitful Place, ed. Zeller, pp 103-110; Blackburn and Piwonka, Remembrance of Patria, 200. Elizabeth Sanders' accounts show her paying a woman to weave for her. See ESS Accounts, Account of Mrs. Jacob Harty, November, 1755 and June, 1758. Loudoun's List shows two weavers in 1756 in Albany although doubtless there were more (The original list is in the Loudoun Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library. I used a photocopy at the Colonial Albany Project). An exception to the use of imported fabric might be clothing bought by slaveholders for slaves. The list of clothes purchased by Walter Butler of the Mohawk Valley for his slaves consists of very basic clothing, John Butler Account Book, 1759-1774, Butlersbury, W.T. Hanson

In Schenectady, during 1768, John Bradt kept accounts of weaving and spinning done for local residents, selling to women as well as to men. Over the course of a year he sold "linnen" and "linsey" to more than thirty customers. This cloth was often purchased in quantities rarely seen when imported fabrics were sold, such as when Maria Mynderse bought 42 ells in June. Historian Adrienne Hood estimates that a family of six needed approximately that much fabric for a year's worth of clothing. Few customers bought this many yards of fabric, many buying between 25 ells or less. The accounts imply that Bradt himself produced the cloth, or that it came from within his household, as he does not record receiving the material as payment, nor does he pay anyone for it. In fact, customers were charged for the cost of the weaving, not for the cost of fabric, suggesting that the customers supplied the raw materials for the finished fabric. Whether his business continued after that year and was recorded elsewhere cannot be determined.<sup>14</sup>

In general, merchants and traders certainly imported enough cloth for the population. When explored in detail, those consumer goods, especially fabric, bought by women in

---

Collection, NYSL.

<sup>14</sup> Adrienne H. Hood, "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," WMO 3rd. Ser. 53(1996): 43-66, 60; John Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1762-, NYSL.

Albany and Schenectady, can give some idea of what types of projects women planned, and therefore, how women spent their time. By looking closely at the goods purchased, we can make some educated guesses about whether they were sewing clothing, household goods, small projects or larger projects. Sometimes the account books are explicit, as when Captain Claus bought "Black Silk for a Bonnet" for his wife, or when Madam Elizabeth Van Rensselaer bought "Penceld Calico... for fornature." It is more difficult to say why Mrs. Cusack needed half an ell of cambric or what Miss Hetty Lansing planned to do with one yard of linen and two yards of white stuff.<sup>15</sup>

Some fabrics had longstanding specialized uses which gives us a preliminary edge in deciphering the records. For instance, shalloon was generally used as a lining, while buckram, a linen fabric with a glue-stiffened back, served as a structural fabric, much as interfacing is used by modern seamstresses. Osnaburg and garlix, both inexpensive, fairly coarse linens, featured largely in the clothing of poorer consumers. Silks, such as alamode or lustring (lustring), could only be bought by wealthier customers and

---

<sup>15</sup> Aug. 7, 1762 (Claus), Sept. 14, 1762 (Cusack) Tyms Day Book; Aug. 5, 1749 (Van Rensselaer), Robert Sanders Account Book, Albany, 1749-1753, Robert Sanders Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collection, NYSL; Aug. 27, 1761 (Lansing), ARM accounts.

were used principally in gowns.<sup>16</sup>

Historian Adrienne Hood's extensive research into the cloth-making industry of Pennsylvania has yielded approximations for the amount of fabric needed for particular projects. Clearly, if a woman bought one yard of challis, she did not plan to make a gown. Hood estimates that a minimum wardrobe for a woman with enough property to warrant an inventory in the eighteenth century likely included "one good gown (7 yards), one petticoat (3 yards), one good cloak (4 yards), two bodices or short gowns (5 yards), two aprons (2 yards), two shifts (6 yards) and a coarsecloak (4 yards)," with everything to be replaced every two years or so. Poorer women made do with less."

---

<sup>16</sup> For definitions of many fabrics see Florence M. Montgomery, Textiles in America, 1650-1870 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984); Garlix played a large role in the Indian trade; osnaburg commonly was used in slave clothing in some areas. Both of these were coarse linen fabrics. See for instance, Kathryn E. Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1810 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 122-123, and Linda Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People': Slave Clothing in Early Virginia," Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts (1988): 26-70.; For an example of a lutestring or lustring gown possibly belonging to Elizabeth Sanders, see Roderic H. Blackburn, Cherry Hill: The History and Collections of a Van Rensselaer Family (Albany, NY: Historic Cherry Hill, 1976), fig. 166.

" Hood, "The Material World of Cloth," 48.

Table 7.

YARDAGE NEEDED FOR CLOTHING AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS

<u>Clothing: Yards</u>	<u>Household Linens</u>
Petticoat: 3	Sheet: 6 yards
Shift: 3.5	Tablecloth: 1 Yard
Apron: 1	Napkin: .6 yard
Cap: .5	Towel: .5 yard
Gown: 7	Bed Tick: 10 yards
Cloak: 4	Bag, Lge: 2 yards
Breeches: 3	
Shirt: 3.5	
Waistcoat: 2.25	
Coat: 4	
Suit: 7	

Source: Hood, "The Material World of Cloth," 48.

Hood largely discounts the consumption of cloth for the clothing of children, suggesting that their clothes mainly were cut down from adult articles, which likely was the case for most children. The wealthy Sanders children, however, had clothing made especially for them after the deaths of their parents. In 1765, for instance, John Sanders charged the estate of his brother, Robert, for payment to Anna Chea "for making 2 Pettecoats & Quilting them" for Debora and Maria Sanders. Several months later, he made an additional charge for the materials for clothes for young Pieter Sanders, then 10 years old. This purchase included, "3 3/4 Ells Everlasting...3 Ells Black Camblet...2 1/2 Ells Black



Shalloon...1 Stick mohair...1 1/2 doz Brest Buttons...2  
hencks silk," enough for a suit with a lined jacket.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, in addition to children, there were babies, who took an unknown amount of fabric for diapers and clothing. Some forms of baby clothing, such as long dresses, used large quantities of material. According to historian Jane Nylander, linen becomes softer and more absorbent as it gets used, so diapers could be made from old linen. This linen would not show up in the records of merchants or traders, although the work spent making the small clothes might. In 1756, Elizabeth Sanders paid Mrs. Maria Graveraet for making "12 New Small Shirts." At the time, Sanders had a baby son aged about nine months, as well another son aged three, and daughters aged four and seven. Certainly in later periods baby clothes were the most likely articles of clothing to be casually passed down, but after several children, some clothes likely needed replacing.<sup>17</sup>

The New York Dutch used substantial amounts of fabric in their houses, such as window curtains, cloths for various

---

<sup>16</sup> Hood, "The World of Cloth," 48-49; The Estate of Robert Sanders, John Sanders and Jacob Glen, Account & Day Book, Schenectady, 1752-1761 (Glen) and 1765-1771 (Sanders), N-YHS.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Nylander, "Clothing for the Little Stranger, 1740-1850" Families and Children: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1985 (Boston: Boston University, 1987) pp. 64-77, 66; Account of Mrs. Maria Graveraet, ESS Accounts.

pieces of furniture, bed curtains, coverlets, and lap covers. Hood suggests yardage for only a few household goods. Distinguishing all the various intended projects remains, of course, impossible, but it is possible to tell large projects from small and perhaps, clothing from household linens. It is unclear whether a young woman entered marriage with a full complement of household linens but longstanding interpretations of household formation rest on the assumption that they did. Women of Dutch descent, in particular, have been ascribed a special attachment to linens and textiles. If, as historian Houde suggests, many household textiles were made from locally produced cloth, we can perhaps speculate that many of the sewing projects represented in the account books were for personal clothing and not for the basics of the household.<sup>20</sup>

In colonial days, clothing served as an important means of expressing one's status and identity. Clothing reinforced the relative position of people in a hierarchical world, allowing people, men and women to judge each other

---

<sup>20</sup> Hood, "The World of Cloth," 48-50; Houde, "Not Just Another Pretty Dress," 105; Simon Schama discusses the importance of fine clothing and textiles to Dutch households, The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) 316-320; It is certainly possible, although I did not find evidence to directly support this, that individual families ordered large quantities of household linens from Holland or other sources.

promptly. The use of rich fabrics conveyed the importance of the wearer, especially on formal or ritualized occasions. Men and women in early America did not wear their best clothes all the time, however, but saved their most expensive clothing for Sundays.<sup>22</sup>

Outfits varied somewhat from region to region of early America. In Nova Scotia, for instance, everyday dress differed markedly from Sunday best and consisted of a woolsey petticoat and apron, over which they wore a loose jacket. They used caps infrequently. How many items each woman owned is not clear. Poor women and slaves in hotter climates wore rather less clothing than those in the north, although house servants dressed rather more elaborately than field slaves. Portraits provide little guidance for studying everyday dress, while inventories emphasize those articles of clothing most valued by the appraiser. The everyday dress of New York Dutch women perhaps did not vary greatly from other colonials, but may still have had its own distinctive touches, such as a more widescale use of caps.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, "A Church-Goin' People are a Dress-Lovin' People," Church History 58(1989): 36-51; See also T.H. Breen, "The Meaning of 'Likeness': American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," Word and Image 6(1991): 325-350 where he discusses "self-fashioning" using clothing and fabrics.

<sup>23</sup> Clary Croft and Sharon Croft, "Civilian Everyday Clothing of Adult Planters, 1759-1783," in Conrad, ed., Intimate Relations, pp. 141-155; Linda Baumgarten, "Clothing for the

Many of the purchases of small quantities of fabric, a yard or less for instance, probably became caps or aprons. Lawn, a fine linen, was only purchased in quantities of less than two yards, and commonly used for caps, neckerchiefs, sleeves and dressy aprons, such as are seen in portraits of the period.<sup>23</sup> Calico and satin or satteen were also bought in these small amounts suggesting that some women preferred their caps out of fabrics other than the more standard white lawn, or could not afford the lawn. In addition to lawn, women made aprons out of calico, linen, and check (checked fabric). The three or more yards needed for petticoats were purchased in a few fabrics in the 1760s, especially calico, check, linen, and stuff. Only one major purchase of a silk occurred at Samuel Tyms' store in 1763, when Susanna Van Patten bought alamode a month before her wedding. The purchase of quantities large enough for an entire gown, or other large project, took place infrequently. We can not be certain that the 18 yards of bombazine purchased by Susanna van Patten was used to replenish her wardrobe, or that the 12 yards of camblet purchased by Magtilda created new

---

People," 43-50.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, the various portraits of women in Blackburn and Piwonka, Remembrance of Patria, especially the portrait of Deborah Glen of Scotia attributed to Pieter Vanderlyn, 201, 228. Glen was the sister-in-law of Robert and Elizabeth Sanders.

clothing for her, but the purchase of large quantities of fabric suggests some major overhauling of either household linens or clothing.<sup>24</sup>

The fabric bought by the customers of Samuel Tyms and the Albany retail merchant differed from earlier purchases made of Robert and Elizabeth Sanders. Elizabeth Sanders made a number of sales of cambric and lawn, as well as muslin and numerous other fabric types, suggesting that the fashion for caps influenced some of the consumer choices in the 1750s as well. However, one fabric, buckram, sold regularly in small quantities by Mrs. Sanders and by her husband, was not purchased by women a few years later. Buckram served to stiffen fabrics, and provide a shape to clothing for both men and women and clearly had no decorative appeal.

Consumer durables did not form the only component of the Anglo-American consumer revolution. In England, consumers replaced long-time staples with imported foods, soon coming to regard the imports as necessities. Groceries from exotic places quickly found a place in the hearts and

---

<sup>24</sup> Stuff was a woolen cloth. Camlet was a fabric often made of "various combinations of wool, silk, hair, and latterly cotton or linen." Camlet (or camblet) sometimes included goat hair. Bombazine was a twilled worsted dress material, often mixed with cotton or silk. Definitions largely based on those in the Oxford Universal Dictionary, revised and edited by C.T. Onions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

diets of British consumers. In England, during this period, the smaller towns and villages witnessed an increasing dependence on imported groceries as many people especially women, focused their money on buying tea, sugar, and white flour. The amounts purchased by New York consumers suggest less reliance on these items. Over the course of a year, in Samuel Tyms' store, for those who bought sugar and tea, men and women together averaged only 1.2 purchases of sugar and 1.6 purchases of tea. The quantities purchased varied quite widely. A man who retailed tea might buy as much as 50 pounds of tea while a widow might splurge and treat herself to 1/4 of a pound.<sup>-5</sup>

Tea drinking provides the most dramatic example of a fashion that became a social need, triggering the consumption of both tea and tea equipage. Tea had been a real luxury at the end of the seventeenth century, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, figured as a very common purchase. The acquisition of proper teawares became a necessity, as opposed to a luxury, in the eyes of many families. For most consumers, porcelain teabowls remained out of reach

---

<sup>-5</sup> Carole Shammas, The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 259; Hoh-cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui, Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 189-190, 290-291. Martin, "Buying into the World of Goods," 346, concludes that a pound of tea lasted an average of eight months.; Tyms Day Book, James Cusack, September 29, 1763; Widow Farley, August 18, 1763.

financially, but many families could afford teawares of a lesser sort.<sup>16</sup>

Other imported groceries that assumed some prominence in the purchase of Anglo-Americans included chocolate, raisins, spices, lemons, and especially, sugar. Americans, restricted from importing these goods directly from their places of production, bought them readily as England re-exported them to the colonies.<sup>17</sup> The fruits, rice, wheat and bran sold by the Sanders came both from local and more distant sources. The exchanges with local merchants suggest that local products held very little appeal as consumer goods. Exchanges that featured local goods changing hands in both directions took place in stores in a very limited way. Merchants might accept items of a local provenance, but consumers did not care for them in a retail setting.

The relatively limited selection of goods purchased by New York women had no connection to the merchandise available. Traders going to the forts often bought large quantities of varied items, from creampots and other imported ceramics to playing cards to assortments of wines

---

<sup>16</sup> For more on the growth of tea as a consumer item, see Martin, "Buying into a World of Goods" 319-354; Mui and Mui, Shops and Shopkeeping in England, 161-172.

<sup>17</sup> Shammass, The Pre-Industrial Consumer, 83; Smuggling apparently provided one way around the trade restrictions, allowing an indeterminate amount of illegal goods entry to the market.

and liquors, not to mention articles of clothing and dress. Historian Ann Smart Martin notes that in Virginia, the spread of goods occurred unevenly, with no backcountry area receiving the full range of items available elsewhere. In New York, it remains difficult to say that gaps occurred in the inventories of merchants because of access or because of local tastes. In Virginia, many people purchased coffee, in New York, virtually noone bought coffee. Could they have gotten coffee if they had wanted? Likely, yes. If the demand had existed, merchants and traders almost certainly could have found a source.<sup>26</sup>

While certainly, women of all ages enjoyed a less obvious engagement with the economy than men, as consumers as well as producers, nevertheless their role was both visible and significant. The account books serve both as an important reminder of the presence of women in the colonial economy, and as evidence of the nature of that involvement. The books record little about the lives of young, single, women. Initially, these young women or girls appear rarely, and when they do, it is as somebody's daughter buying something. However, as the century moves on, they gain in

---

<sup>26</sup> Martin, "Buying into the World of Goods," 345. Other regional variations occur in patterns of consumer spending. On eighteenth-century archaeological sites, porcelain imported from China consistently is found in much greater proportions than on sites in New England.



visibility and access to the market, developing their own roles as consumers. Married women, nearly as obscure, also step out from the shadows, as retailers record the purchases by wives. Widows, acting on their own, figure most largely as consumers. The account books from the years 1750 to 1765 illuminate the consumer habits of grown women in their various life stages.

The increased visibility of women once they became widows and were no longer hidden by their husband's name is especially noticeable in the accounts of Robert Sanders. One particular case illustrates the emergence of the widow from behind the name of her husband. After the death of her husband, Jacob, Maria Merkel became much more noticeable, despite the fact that her sons conducted much of her business for her. Robert Sanders' accounts show purchases first by Jacob Merkel, subsequent items charged to his estate, and after a period of months, exchanges noted to the account of Mrs. Maria Merkel, sometimes called Widow. Initially, Mrs. Merkel's authority rested only on her connection to her husband. As time passed, that connection faded and Robert Sanders recognized her as a customer in her own right.<sup>49</sup>

The situation for a widow who remarried shows a

---

<sup>49</sup> See for instance, the several Merkel entries during 1749-1750 in Robert Sanders Accounts.

different facet of female consumption. The widow Susanna Van Patten of Schenectady married in the middle of 1763. Her consumer habits changed dramatically, yet like other married women of the 1760s, she did not return completely to the obscurity of married life. During the early 1760s, Susanna Van Patten paid frequent visits to the store of Samuel Tyms. In 1763, she made purchases on 51 different occasions between January and July (when she remarried), making her by far the most frequent customer of the store, male or female. Winter did not slow down her expeditions; she went to Tyms' 13 times in February alone, up from five in January. In addition to those visits made for purchasing, Van Patten also made calls to pay on her account. Van Patten's reasons for going to the Tyms establishment were perhaps due as much to convenience and to family connections as they were to the actual goods she purchased. Jannetje Tyms, the wife of Samuel, was a cousin by marriage to Susanna. Widow Van Patten lived in the village of Schenectady, as did Samuel Tyms, needing only to stroll a short distance to make her purchases and to engage in conversation with a member of her extended family. Other older women also shopped extensively at the shops of personal connections, such as Rebecca Dox, the mother-in-law and frequent customer at the store of her son-in-law,

William Kane.<sup>30</sup>

Marriage changed Susanna Van Patten's shopping habits dramatically. On the 9th of July, the records note her first appearance as the wife of John Cuyler. For the rest of the year, her visits to the store number five altogether. Clearly, the change in her marital status affected her consumer habits. The marriage may likewise have altered the consumer habits of her new husband. For instance, John Cuyler does not appear as a customer of Samuel Tyms in 1763 before his marriage. After his marriage, he purchased goods at the store on five different occasions. Significantly, his purchases consisted largely of quarts of wine or madeira, such as his new wife commonly bought in the months prior to her marriage.

The goods purchased by Susanna Van Patten tell us very little about her working life as a widow or a wife. By far her most common purchase was "1 quart madeira." The purchase of wine every few days or even more often, certainly draws one to conclude that Mrs. Van Patten drank rather a lot, especially in the cold month of February. In the six months or so before her marriage, she made 16 different purchases of wine or madeira, mostly buying by the quart but

---

<sup>30</sup> Tyms Day Book, 1763; Van Patten Family History File, Schenectady Historical Society; William Kane Day Book, 1765.

occasionally by the pint or half gallon. With the exception of sewing projects, the purchases of New York women did not connect to their working lives.

During 1762, Widow Van Patten's purchases showed, if anything, as much attention to luxury items, suggesting a long term interest in the consumption of exotic goods. She bought paper, cap lace, chocolate, stone[ware] plates and other items that certainly could appear to be non-essential items and can not clearly be said to relate to household production. Her other common purchases included tea and fabric (12 purchases each). When she bought fabric, she generally bought relatively large quantities such as four ells of linen, six ells of checked cloth, or 18 ells of bombazine.<sup>31</sup> Approximately a month before her nuptials she purchased 6 yards of "figured Alamode." Alamode was a thin silk; the fact that it was figured added to its already high cost. This material likely made a stylish gown for a warm July wedding. Mrs. Van Patten's first wedding took place in 1750. If she had been in her early twenties then, then she likely was still in her thirties at the time of her second marriage. Her purchases indeed do not seem to be those of a stolid, older widow, but had much more to do with decorating

---

<sup>31</sup> An ell measured about 39 inches, OUD. For an example of a silk gown, possibly worn as a wedding dress, see In Remembrance of Patria, 202.

her person. In the months after her marriage, the purchases of both Susanna and John Cuyler bore the imprint of her previous pattern of shopping. However, both her visits and his became increasingly infrequent. In July, shortly after their marriage, Susanna Cuyler came to the store twice and her husband came four times. He bought quarts of madeira on three occasions, as well as tea and buttons, while she bought fabric and lace on her visits. He returned for madeira in August, cheese in September, and for both in October. Susanna came once more to the store, in December, when she bought a small amount of lawn and a set of black teaware. These patterns make it seem more likely that the madeira she purchased in such quantities actually had been for John Cuyler, or for the two of them to share as they courted. Once they were married, he bought his own madeira while she continued to buy materials for sewing.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Lawn is a very fine linen.

Table 8.

## COMPARATIVE PURCHASES OF TWO WIDOWS, SCHENECTADY, 1763

	Susanna Van Patten 51 visits, jan-june	Margaret Van Dyke 17 visits, jan-dec
Fabric	1	1
Notions/Trim	6	1
Tea	11	2
Sugar	2	1
Molasses	-	6
Wine	16	-
Rum	-	1
Gin	1	-
Meat	-	1
Pepper	2	-
Shoes	1	1
Stockings	3	-
Cap	-	1
Gloves	1	-
Pencils	-	1
Snuff box	-	1
Buckles	1	-
Powder	1	-
Cash	1	6

Source: Samuel Tyms Account Book, 1763.

Margaret Van Dyke, the widow of the local doctor Cornelius Van Dyke made very different purchases and followed a different pattern in her shopping habits. She appears to have been born around 1711 and married in 1738. Over the course of the year 1763, Widow Van Dyke made purchases at Samuel Tyms store 17 different times. According to the tax list of 1766, Widow Van Dyke lived a door or two away from Samuel Tyms. She apparently shopped with him out of convenience. The items she left with most

frequently were molasses and cash.<sup>33</sup> Over the course of the year she bought eight and a half gallons of molasses.

Unlike Susanna Van Patten, Margaret Van Dyke bought fabric only once that year from Samuel Tyms, five ells of calico, and only once purchased liquor, although that once it was five gallons of rum. Margaret Van Dyke's other purchases included tea (twice), shoes, pencils, and a snuff box.

Here, we see two widows, separated in age by approximately 15 years, with completely different habits of consumption. Of course, we do not know what they bought at other venues. We know that Susanna Van Patten paid John Bradt for tailoring, but his accounts do not show her buying her buying other goods from him.<sup>34</sup>

The evidence from the Tyms' account book shows the difficulties in making generalizations about people's lives bought based on broad demographic or marital categories. Margaret Van Dyke and Susanna Van Patten were clearly different kinds of widows. The purchases they made show that their lives had different focal points. Widow Van Dyke was Samuel Tyms' only female customer for molasses and bought a total of nearly 13 gallons. The large quantities

---

<sup>33</sup> Small stores often functioned much like banks, loaning small amounts of cash and recording these interchanges as an ordinary purchase or debt, Shammass, The Pre-Industrial Consumer, 284.

<sup>34</sup> John Bradt Account Book, Dec. 10, 1762.

of molasses purchased by Widow Van Dyke could perhaps have been part of her ongoing medical practice, one that she pursued in tandem to her husband while he was alive and on her own after his death. Besides serving as a sweetener, molasses sometimes served as an ingredient in medical decoctions.<sup>35</sup>

Both Susanna Van Patten and Margaret Van Dyke were exceptional in the number of regular visits they made to the Tyms establishment. Most other women, whether widowed, married, or single, made only a handful of purchases over the course of a year. The average number of visits made by women other than Mrs. Van Patten and Mrs. Van Dyke was less than two, and ranged from 1 to 7. Of the 43 women who bought goods from Samuel Tyms during the year 1763, 22 of them made only one trip to his store. In Albany in 1764, the female customers of the unidentified retail merchant numbered 24. The average number of trips made by these women that culminated in a purchase was just over two, with the range of trips falling between 1 and 5. This does not argue for women as an important presence in the consumer marketplace.

---

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Van Dyke continued her husband's medical practice after his death, continuing to give "klisters" and other treatments. Medical Journals and Accounts, 1753-1762, (partly in Dutch), Schenectady, Van Dyke Family Papers, NYSL; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 376, note 28.



However, Historian Neil McKendrick, whose important work first connected women to the eighteenth-century consumer revolution, claims that women's purchases helped fuel the increases in production, but stressed that women's importance could not be decided with regard to absolute numbers. Rather, he says that the small, percentage increases linked women consumers were important on their own.<sup>16</sup>

Other widows in the area shopped differently with local merchants and traders. Martha or Metje Fairley bought tea and fabric from Samuel Tyms, but never rum or wine. Instead she bought beer by the barrel from John Bradt. Each of these widows fitted consumer purchases into her life in her own way. Each of them, however, bought quite a narrow range of products. Purchases by women, whether single, married or widowed, generally did not stray from a fairly small list of goods that included tea, sugar, textiles, notions, and small clothes. However extravagant Susanna Van Patten might appear, she operated within that very small spectrum of consumer choices. Madam Schuyler of Albany, on the other hand, had property that enabled her to spend rather more widely than her less well-to-do counterparts, particularly in the

---

<sup>16</sup> Neil McKendrick, "Home Demand and Economic Growth: A New View of the Role of Women in the Industrial Revolution," in Historical Studies in English Thought and Society, Neil McKendrick, ed. (New York: 1974), 152-210.

range of food and grocery items. Madam Schuyler bought occasional goods from the unidentified merchant but relied to large degree on the business of her nephew, Philip Cuyler, obtaining a wide range of goods from him. His bill to her estate gives some idea of the purchases of a truly wealthy widow, as opposed to the frequent but relatively unvariable purchases of most widows, indeed most women consumers. Margaret Schuyler's purchases in no way represent the norm of consumer habits among eighteenth-century women but they do serve to illustrate some of the products becoming increasingly available during the 1760s. She bought for example, cinnamon, ginger, mace, and cloves, as well as salt and pepper. She acquired not just sugar, but "Muscovada Sugar," "Loave sugar," and "Powder sugar." She purchased tea, but it was "Green Tea." Unlike Tyms' customers, she obtained coffee and brandy. She bought fabric and trim during the year, but fabric and sewing supplies did not dominate her purchases to the extent they did for other, poorer women.<sup>37</sup>

Even as distinctions existed between the purchases of individual widows based on particular circumstances, so too did some general differences between other groups of women,

---

<sup>37</sup> Tyms Day Book, Apr. 15 and Oct. 10, 1763; John Bradt Account Book, Feb. 4, 1764; Margaret Schuyler: Account Against her Estate, 1765-1786, Schuyler Family Papers, AIHA; Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, II:83.

based largely on age and marital status. Single, never-married women bought differently than did either married or widowed women. Women who bought at the store of the Albany Retail merchant and the store of Samuel Tyms show striking differences in the demographic characteristics of women consumers. The daybook of the Retail Merchant showed a much higher proportion of single women. Eight of his 24 female customers appear to have been single, noted as "Miss."<sup>36</sup> Eight of Samuel Tyms' 43 female customers were single women, identified as "Miss," or as someone's daughter or sister. Samuel Tyms did have some singlewomen on his list, as did Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders, but proportionally far less than the unidentified Albany Retail Merchant.

These proportions contrast sharply to the customers of Robert Sanders and Walter Butler. The women customers of Robert Sanders in 1749-50 included no singlewomen. Walter Butler's records of the 1740s do not include any sales to single women except as daughters under their fathers' accounts while the later records of John Butler from the 1750s through 1774, do include those transactions. Overall the trend seems straightforward. The years of the 1750s and

---

<sup>36</sup> One of the eight, Caty Fryer, was called "Mrs." by the merchant, but was later found to be a single woman (CAP 8036). See Stefan Bielinski, "Broken Homes: Widows, Abandoned Wives, and Single Women in Wartime Albany, 1775-1783," unpub. paper presented at the Conference on New York History, 1996, New Paltz, New York, 25.

1760s saw the increasing involvement of young, unmarried women in the consumer economy of Albany and Schenectady. The increasing presence of single women, although not powerful in the sense of how much money they spent, highlights again a delicate shift in the balance of domestic structure.<sup>39</sup>

The place of single women in the local economy expanded during the middle years of the century. The general upheaval triggered by the Seven Years' War, and the presence of the soldiers certainly created a variety of stresses in the area. Anne Grant, recollecting childhood years spent in Albany, remembered that these years were marked by conflict between the older generation of parents and their adolescent children. The sophistication of the soldiers and the entertainments that they brought with them attracted the young New Yorkers. A local minister was said to have entered into open arguments with the young people when they attended a play. The young people rejected their Dutch heritage, including the language leaving their parents at their wits' end, at least as Grant remembered. This was not the only colony, however, that showed signs of unrest among

---

<sup>39</sup> When I use the term single women, I mean women who have not yet been married, as opposed to women who are single because they have been widowed. Robert Sanders Accounts; Walter Butler Account Book, 1733-1743, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL; John Butler, Account Book, 1759-1774, Butlersbury, W.T. Hanson Collection, NYSL.

the young.<sup>40</sup>

The possibility of an nascent trend toward a youth sub-culture should not be ignored. Cornelia Dayton has shown how the young adults of Connecticut created their own society, following rules that their parents certainly did not set. Eighteenth-century observer Anne Grant also describes the importance of the peer group to the Albany young. She claimed that they went everywhere together and regarded the bond as being as close as between siblings. The opinions and attitudes of the young towards each other, and in opposition to their elders, encouraged social change.<sup>41</sup>

For young women, especially those who had some small amount of income, the obvious items on which spend money were those related to fashion, and those related to establishing their own household. Laurel Ulrich has shown how in late eighteenth-century Maine, the creation of a new household required not only the manufacture of textiles at home, but a variety of purchases at local retail stores. These purchases occurred near the date of the wedding. The single women who bought goods from the merchants of Albany and Schenectady did not seem in any way to be collecting

---

<sup>40</sup> Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, I: 61-63.

<sup>41</sup> Cornelia Hughes Dayton, "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village," WMO 58(1991):19-49; Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, II: 20-21.

goods for their own households. Either they relied on their mothers to oversee this operation over a long period of time, or retail stores had not yet become the source of goods for creating a new household. Single women who bought things from local retailers bought on a small scale and bought almost entirely for their own persons. When Miss Christeana Truewase (Truax) bought herself a necklace and earbobs, she spent her small amount of money for her own entertainment. In this, the young women took part in a continuum of purchasing established by their mothers and the older women of the community. The emphasis on clothing and self-adornment continued to through the lives of many women, but other interests become apparent in the purchases of many married or widowed women.<sup>42</sup>

Older, widowed or married women made many more purchases of fabric when they shopped suggesting one of two situations. First, it suggests that most of the recreational sewing, constructive though it may have been, was undertaken by well-settled women. Counterbalancing this argument is the notion that perhaps these older women also controlled the leisure sewing of the younger unmarried women, maintaining control while providing the younger women with sewing projects and the occasional opportunity to shop.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale, 142-143; Tyms Day Book, May 1, 1762.

Additional disparities between the purchasing patterns of groups of women manifest themselves in the consumption of imported grocery items. Young women simply did not buy chocolate, raisins, wine and the like. Widow Van Patten ran into Tyms' store with great regularity, simply to purchase a small amount of wine or chocolate. Tea figured largely in the purchases of the two older groups and much less significantly in the youngest group. The widows that bought these little luxuries appear to have had more money than some other widows. Very few women bought staples at the store. Even city dwellers bought little in the way of locally grown food, suggesting that people supplied themselves either from their own crops or else made other arrangements for their dietary staples, perhaps at poorly documented markets. Single women made fewer trips, buying fewer groceries but often buying one small decorative item, such as a ribbon, or occasionally something more substantial such as a chintz gown, as Miss Mary Smyth did in September of 1763. Some young women sewed to pay for a purchase but not every young woman did that. Thus even though single women had entered the consumer marketplace, their participation was limited by both their lack of financial resources and their interests.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Sept. 5, 1763, Tyms Day Book.

At the same time that single women found a toehold as consumers, married women become more visible in the same marketplace. Still generally masked by their husbands' activities and accounts, married women appear more often in the records of the 1750s and 1760s. The account book of Elizabeth Sanders, emphasizing as it does the number of married women out and about, serves as a corrective to our understanding of women's exclusion from the retail economy while the accounts of Tyms and the unidentified merchant of Albany confirm the presence of women in a store as relatively commonplace.

Some prosperous married women show up less than others who have less obvious assets. For instance, Daniel Claus bought things for his wife, such as "17 yds Rattenett for Mrs Claus," along with a skein of silk and a yard of "Glaiz'd Linen." The daughter of Sir William Johnson, she did not come to the store herself. Anne Grant, writing about her youth in mid-century Albany, saw the daughters of William Johnson as living in a world apart from ordinary people. This world did not involve participation in commercial transactions. After being taken hostage by local revolutionaries in 1775, Lady Polly Johnson, the sister-in-law of Mrs. Claus, clearly considered herself above the hoi-polloi of the Mohawk Valley. She claimed to not understand money and instead relied on her feminine wiles to extract



concessions from her captors. Gentility, for women of high status and British ancestry, meant a separation from trade and commerce.<sup>44</sup>

In Albany, people of lower to middling status bought from the Retail Merchant, including Mrs. Sarah Hilton, Jr., the wife of Jacob Hilton, who was involved in the service trades. Married in 1762 and bearing a child soon thereafter, she was a young mother with little money when she was a customer of the unidentified Albany Retail Merchant. Most of his women customers were not members of the most prominent families. Women of very high status generally did not engage in casual shopping, especially at a general retailing store, instead distancing themselves from disagreeable chores outside of the house.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Tyms Day Book, July 28, 1762; Grant, Memoirs of an American Lady, II: 17-19; Lady Polly's Journal: Narrative of Lady Johnson, nd., Mss. property of Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, (photostat at NAC).

<sup>45</sup> This separation of women and work by class has been noted by other historians. See for instance, Carol Berkin, First Generations: Women in Colonial America (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996).

Table 9.

## Purchases by Women from Various Merchants

Item	Sanders 1749/50 n=13	ARM 1764 n=24	Tyms 1763 n=43	Kane 1765 n=5
Cash*	6	4	13	--
Fabric	31	19	48	5
Gown	--	1	1	--
Shoes	1	10	9	3
Stockings	1	--	7	2
Gloves	2	--	1	--
Mitts	--	--	2	--
H'kerchief	5	4	1	--
Cap/Hat	3	--	1	--
Garters	1	--	1	--
Trimming	4	1	7	--
Buttons	6	--	5	--
Buckles	--	--	1	1
Thread/Silk	12	3	15	--
Pins	--	--	1	1
Tea	5	11	26	3
Coffee	--	--	--	3
Sugar	2	1	11	3
Salt/Spices	5	--	4	--
Rum	11	--	1	2
Wine	--	1	20	1
Other Liquor	--	--	1	7
Butter/Cheese	1	--	1	2
Tablewares	2	3	4	2
Pewter	2	1	--	--
Snuff	1	--	1	--
Powder	1	--	3	--
Sundries	--	1	1	--
Other	wheat beer cider nails-5 scythe  flag pears-2  brimstone empty keg-2	flurate? starch comb soap spelling book stone glue hanging paper-2	bed tick pencils chocolate molasses-6 meat  snuff box	lemons

\* A purchase of cash indicates that the customer received or borrowed cash.

Elizabeth Sanders had 14 women customers during 1754, who made 20 purchases of fabric, and also bought rice, indigo, and wool cards.

Sources: Robert Sanders Account Book; Account Book of an Albany Retail Merchant; Samuel Tyms Day Book (Blot Book); William Kane Day Book.

In the married households, when the husbands did the shopping, purchases tended to be more extensive and included a larger variety of goods. Within a single household, men and women bought largely the same things, but according to different patterns of shopping. Women bought fewer items, and a smaller range of items, but these items loomed large in their lives. On the Kentucky frontier in a slightly later period, men and women also bought essentially the same types of items. We know, however, that they did not buy them for the same purposes.<sup>42</sup>

Two cases provide some sense of the range of participation in the market that occurred in some households. Cristina Tice rarely visited the Tyms' store, perhaps in part because of where the Tices lived. Although Gilbert Tice owned property in Schenectady, he generally lived further west in the Mohawk Valley, operating a tavern near Sir William Johnson's house. The purchases made by

---

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth A. Perkins, "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," JAH 54(1991): 486-510; Looking beyond the actual types of things that consumers bought we see that one major difference between the genders regards the timing of purchases. Married women tended to make most of their visits to stores in the spring during the months of April and May, or in the fall, during September and October, signaling perhaps a regularly occurring break in their other work. Their husbands made more trips at closer regular intervals. I determined the patterns of married women's visits by counting up purchases or credits "pr yr wife" for each month, which gave a general distribution of visits.

Tice reflect his occupation as a tavern-owner, rather than his occupation as a husband and householder. Many of his purchases, such as bowls, rum, and playing cards seem intended for the support of his trade. Bridles, shot, and a powder flask perhaps derive from his role as an officer in the Indian Department. Some of the fabric that Tice purchased may have been intended to benefit his wife and his household, but some, for instance, the two ells of shalloon, the three ells of linen and the three dozen buttons that he purchased on one visit, could certainly have been intended for his own clothing. Making just one visit to Tyms' store during the year, Christina Tice's lack of participation in making purchases might illustrate her removal from the world of retailing. However, she supplied a portion of the amount credited to their account, through her participation in Samuel Tyms' outwork networks. Though she herself bought little, as a wife she had an obligation to contribute to paying down the family debt and her sewing figured largely in settling their account.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of the Whites, we see a different division of purchases between the husband and wife. Here, Catrin White made several visits to the store but bought very

---

<sup>47</sup> Gilbert Tice Account Book, 1771-1774, Johnstown, NYSL; Ernest Green, "Gilbert Tice, U.E.," Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society, 21(1924):186-197; Tyms Day Book, Sept. 24, 1763.

little on each visit, primarily purchasing tea and sugar. Her husband, on the other hand, bought small quantities of fabric and thread, as well as borrowing cash and purchasing a few imported grocery items. Again, these items may not have been for the direct benefit of the household. As a tailor, he may have needed some small amounts of linen, thread or buttons. With these two couples we can see a more full, although not yet achieved, integration of the husband's business with the consumer marketplace. The businesses of these men depended more completely on a consistent trade than did the work of women. Among women, their emerging roles as consumers of imported goods tied only loosely to the substance of their daily work, and much more closely to their leisure or entertainment. In general, however, New York women bought small luxuries, or at least a more luxurious form of a necessity, such as imported stockings. People needed stockings but they didn't need those stockings. The exercise of shopping likewise falls into two categories, serving a social function as well as an economic one.

This notion that consumption came rather slowly to women contradicts some assumptions about women and shopping, long-held by historians and other social observers. The association of women with shopping, especially wasteful shopping generated an apocryphal article, widely printed in

early eighteenth-century newspapers. In the article, the author details his descent into debt at the hands of his wife, who strove to become a "Gentlewoman." Her pursuit of her goal led her to demand the acquisition of expensive pieces of furniture, a tea table, for instance, complete with "Appurtenances of China and Silver." Consigning her husband's old things to storage, she remade their home into a shrine to consumerism. Her husband eventually got his own back, though. While she visited relatives, he took back all her purchases and bought her a cow, a spinning wheel, and knitting needles, "for to tell you the truth...I begin to want for Stockings." The wife in this tale had the power to put her family into debt, but not the power to remain in charge. Her ability to buy expensive, and useless, items was intended to serve as a warning to less wary husbands. The facts as presented in the merchants account do not confirm that women controlled the pursestrings for shopping, but the story certainly indicates some concern that they could.<sup>42</sup>

The New York account books certainly document the presence of women, but by no means validate the notion that

---

<sup>42</sup> Article quoted in Stephen A. Mrozowski, "For Gentlemen of Capacity and Leisure: The Archaeology of Colonial Newspapers," in Documentary Archaeology in the New World, ed. Mary C. Beaudry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 184-191.

women played a large role as shoppers before the Revolution. As consumption became politicized during the embargoes of the 1760s, were women included politically because they were major consumers, or did they become a significant force as consumers because they adopted a role handed to them by revolutionary ideologues? Women in Albany and Schenectady generally bought from a short list of preferred items, and some of those items, such as tea, were the targets of the embargoes. The removal of tea and other imported consumer items from easy availability, along with the increased use of cash, tended to limit women's purchasing, rather than strengthen their position as consumers. The embargoes alone could not create women consumers. The gradual inclusion of younger, unmarried women as consumers during the 1750s and 1760s perhaps had longterm implications in developing a permanent clientele of female shoppers, as the habit of consumption became embedded at an earlier age.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> See Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980), 37-41, and T.H. Breen, "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," WMO 3rd Ser. 50(1993):471-501, 490-491, for discussions of women and political consumerism in the years leading up to the American Revolution. For more on the connection between the consumer revolution and the American Revolution, see T.H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 119 (1988): 73-104.

## Chapter 6.

### Life During Wartime: Those Who Stayed and Those Who Left

Passing through the ruined countryside of the upper Hudson River Valley in 1778, on his way from Albany to Canada, Richard Cartwright described the effects of war.

The whole Way from Still-water to this place [Saratoga] was mark'd with Devastation, and of the many pleasant Habitations formerly within that Distance, some were Burnt, others torn to Pieces and rendered unfit for Use, and but a few of the meanest occupied, the Inhabitants in general having been forced to leave their once peaceful Dwellings to escape the Rage of War.<sup>1</sup>

The war devastated much more than the local landscape, it likewise damaged the human connections that bound the New York communities together. This chapter explores the economic experiences of those who stayed and those who left during the upheaval of wartime.

The American Revolution disrupted the lives and work of the women who lived in the province of New York. Locally the Revolution triggered significant migrations of people,

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Cartwright, "A Journey to Canada," 1779, ms. NAC. Cartwright was not too depressed, however, by the landscape, adding, "Yet the delightful Prospect which the River, the variegated Face of the Country, and the different coloured Foliage on the Trees afforded served somewhat to divert my mind from these melancholy Reflections."



both into and especially out of the Hudson-Mohawk area, seriously damaging local economic and social networks. The economy of New York suffered in the urban settings of Albany and Schenectady, and on the Mohawk frontier, as some people fled the strife for the relative safety of larger towns, while others left their homes for sanctuary in Canada.

The war not only shaped the lives of the women and men of New York, it shaped the historic record. Thus, the same forces that transformed the local economy for the period of the war, recast the nature of the commercial sources left behind. Fewer things to sell meant fewer shops while the new military focus on sales meant those parts of the retail trade most open to women went underground or perhaps became more informal. For those who left, the British Army left a more thorough record of the evolution of British policy and traces of a few women from the Hudson-Mohawk area of New York.

The disruption of social relationships forced an adjustment of women's economic engagement, occurring whether the women left as loyalists or stayed as patriots, and affecting the participation of women in several ways. First, the war forced the removal of men from the local economy, leaving many women alone to support themselves and their families. At the same time, the commercial reorganization occasioned by the war closed to women

longstanding economic approaches, and reduced local demand for products of traditional skills in a consumer setting. Finally, the social organization of the war removed a certain amount of control from the hands of both men and women, substituting an explicit institutional authority for the implicit authority of local communities. The British Army in Canada, and the patriot committees in Albany and Schenectady oversaw and enforced a limited vision of women's usefulness in the local economy.<sup>-</sup>

New networks, economic and social sprang up in the community that was left. Many men found their new lives structured by military connections and the daily work of war. Women, on the other hand, carried on their work in either an unfamiliar place with few old acquaintances and relations, or, in a familiar place with large holes torn in the social fabric of the community. Of the women who stayed in Albany, whether as loyalists, patriots, or disinterested parties, many shared a common experience; they lived without men. The numbers of men called to war meant that many women confronted extended periods of time, sometimes even years, where they served as the sole means of support for their families. Women faced this challenge, not always

---

- For more on the politics of the Revolution in New York, see Edward Countryman, A People in Revolt: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988).

successfully, in commercial circumstances that denied to them certain pre-war opportunities. Lone women became free-agents in the sense that they had to depend on themselves, but not in the sense of acquiring economic power.

Historians have suggested that during times of war, the economic role of married women expanded to include some of the work that their husbands had performed during peacetime.<sup>3</sup> Abigail Adams, for instance, supported her family by running the family farm while her husband carried on his work in Philadelphia and elsewhere. These enlarged responsibilities did not however carry over into the commercial world of New York. Those account books from the Revolutionary period in Albany, Schenectady, and the Mohawk Valley do not show women doing their husband's business in an intact local economy. Likewise, yarn and textiles produced by women for the American Army, such as described by historian Linda Kerber left no trace in the records of the civilian economy.<sup>4</sup> A few women took over businesses as tavern-keeping for their husbands, but women, especially

---

<sup>3</sup> For one perspective on this topic, see Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 214-224.

<sup>4</sup> Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1980), 41-42; Receipts and accounts for the purchases of supplies by the American Army in the Albany area recount transactions with men, almost exclusively.

widows such as Martha Vernor, had frequently run these types of operation. Women inherited the charge to look after family and property, but this, especially in frontier New York with its Dutch heritage, had long been a part of the role of married women. The actual work that this duty required did not replicate the pre-war work of men. The war disrupted the local economy to such an extent that women could not simply carry on performing the tasks that their husbands' had done, and in some cases could not carry on their own work. Janetie Van Woert Clement of Albany had continued her husband's retailing after his death in the late 1750s, but found herself largely stymied by the collapse of the Indian trade. Women who had been left alone for one reason or another chose from a limited list of options to support themselves. Some who had been dependent on parents moved in with brothers or sisters. Others took in boarders to help support themselves during the stressful years of the war.<sup>5</sup> But this work did not consist of men's work, nor did women's work expand noticeably.

---

<sup>5</sup> Many of the specifics about women's experiences in Albany during the Revolution have been collected from the path-breaking data collection engineered by Stefan Bielinski in the work of the Colonial Albany Social History Project. Some of Bielinski's work on women in Albany can be found in Stefan Bielinski, "Women Alone: Widows, Abandoned Wives, and Single Women in Wartime Albany, 1775-1783" paper presented at the Conference on New York History, June 1996, New Paltz, New York.

The war did nothing so simple as to increase the economic autonomy of women, at least not in the sense of making their work more like their husbands. This happened sometimes, and in some places, but forces connected to the war operated simultaneously to curtail women's roles outside the home. The women left alone by war operated in a far more skeletal economy, one driven by military needs that consciously excluded women. As the colonies increasingly identified with their army and their own autonomy, the focus on things military in time of war tended to exclude women from the day-to-day functioning of the economy. In Albany, during the mid-late 1770s, the local merchants and tradespeople shifted their attention away from retail trading and towards supplying the army. For instance, the uncle of the Quackenbush girls built an oven and began an active business baking biscuits for the army.<sup>6</sup> A similar adjustment had occurred during the Seven Years' War but during the earlier war, consumer trading had accelerated. During the Revolution, broken ties to Great Britain unsettled commerce at all levels. The work that women had used in trade no longer found a market, while the goods that women had been used to buying were not easily found. The shifts in commercial focus during the Revolutionary War

---

<sup>6</sup> Quackenbush Account Book, Albany, Quackenbush Family Papers, NYSL.

tended to exclude women rather than to include them.

The local economy, on the whole, saw so much damage that it was no simple matter to replace men with women. Some merchants and traders dropped their businesses and fled. Phyn and Ellice eventually relocated to Canada, after struggling to remain afloat in Schenectady. Those who relied on imports from England struggled to keep going, but sometimes fled or moved as well. The local networks of trade were considerably altered by the war. Not only were connections between men broken and trade thwarted, but the products of women's work lost exchange value. Account books show the continuing importance of cash during this period and very few exchanges based on women's productive work. Work that had been useful for trade before the war was much less in evidence during the war. The products of some women's chores, such as spinning, may have become temporarily limited to the household use, as established markets closed. John Butler took spinning in trade in 1774, but by 1775, he had left his home in the Mohawk Valley to lead Butler's Rangers against the Americans.<sup>7</sup>

The women who stayed behind as loyalist husbands left occupied a familiar place geographically, but trade and personal relationships both had been disrupted. Absent

---

<sup>7</sup> John Butler Account Book, Butlersbury, 1759-1774, NYSL.

husbands sometimes attempted to establish new routes for contact and supplies to remedy the lack of goods. John Stevenson, living in Montreal in 1780 wrote to John Porteous in Detroit, asking him to send goods to his wife in Albany. He wrote, "Should a Flag offer for Albany please send my Wife a few pounds green Tea some Loaf sugar two or three pcs Linnen as many of Callicoe ... Pins Needles Thd etc directed to the care of Volckert P. Douw Esq. or Genll Schuyler."<sup>5</sup>

These goods speak of the days before the war, when women commonly bought the very goods contained in the list. Consumer wares, such as notions for sewing, were in short supply, assuming a lower priority for trade than the goods needed for war.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Stevenson did not ask for goods that would assist his wife in doing anything except re-creating her pre-war activities. She did not need (at least in his opinion) anything that would add to her ability to earn money or support herself in his absence. The goods he sought for his wife connected her directly to an earlier life in peacetime.

---

<sup>5</sup> John Stevenson to John Porteous, July 1, 1780, Porteous Papers, Buffalo and Erie Historical Society Microfilm, Reel 1, NAC.

<sup>6</sup> Consumer goods were imported extensively by the British Army and British sympathizers in ports such as New York. See for instance, Arlene Palmer Schwind, "The Ceramic Imports of Frederick Rhineland, New York Loyalist Merchant," Winterthur Portfolio 19(1984): 21-36.

In the early days of the conflict, Sophia Quackenbush left New York City with her sister and mother, moving to Albany to because they thought it would be safer. The three of them shared one house, while an uncle rented another, using his oven to bake breads for sale to the military. Shortly after the move, Sophia wrote to her grandmother in New York requesting her to fetch some things for them from their house and ship them up to Albany. Her grandmother, Sophia wrote, should go to the house of their former neighbor,

and get the key of our house and get out of it the basket of patches which is in the undercloset upstairs in the big room and the stoves and tests and the bundle of patterns out of the press in the garret...if you will send the things up by a safe [illeg] you will oblige your most Dutiful Grandaughter.<sup>10</sup>

Her requests for sewing supplies, stoves and an additional request for a book suggest that the Quackenbush women planned on a relatively sedate, though constructive, winter of sewing, reading, and trying to keep warm. While their uncle Peter planned a new business, these women settled in for the duration, thinking mainly of passing the time. They planned for a temporary visit, as they looked for a house to rent, and left their New York house in the care of a neighbor.

---

<sup>10</sup> Sophia Quackenbush to Margaret Quackenbos, Albany, November 25, 1775, Quackenbush Family Papers, NYSL.



The day book of William Kane and the Account Book of a General Trader in Albany both show very few women buying or paying for things during the years of the war. The payments received by the Albany General Trader in 1775 and 1776 consisted overwhelmingly of cash payments (19) compared to payments of any other kind (5).<sup>22</sup> Women made none of these payments. William Kane's accounts, spanning the years of the war, show not only a heavy reliance on cash but a more obvious interest in the kind of cash, as shown in the more specific descriptions of what was used for payment. The stress of war drew people further away from a trade based on the exchange of locally produced goods and services.

Margaret Schuyler Schuyler,<sup>23</sup> quite elderly by the beginning of the war, changed her buying habits considerably during the years of the American Revolution. Her accounts with her nephew, Philip Cuyler, show the increased reliance on cash by various tradespeople. Her debts owed to Cuyler for the years between 1775 and her death in 1782 consisted entirely of cash, whether loaned directly to her or paid to

---

<sup>22</sup> Account Book of Albany General Trader 1773-1776, Albany, NYSL; Payments in 1775: Cash-15, Note-1, Cash and Note-1, Other- 3 (1-shoes); 1776: Cash-4, Other-2 (1 Butter, 1 Rum).

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Schuyler married her cousin, Philip Schuyler. I use her full name here to illustrate both the family connection and to distinguish her from her well-known relative, Margaret van Slichtenhorst Schuyler, who lived in Albany earlier in the century.

various workman and tradespeople. A number of factors could have contributed to this sudden change in Madam Schuyler's spending habits, such as her advancing age, or a change in the kind of business that Philip Cuyler ran. The war certainly played some part in this transformation by limiting the consumer goods available, and by shaping Cuyler's business interests. Access to cash may have made some retailers more powerful than they otherwise would have been in relation to retailers with less access to ready money. In 1769, Madam Schuyler had purchased consumer products that included madeira wine, sweet oil, spices, currents, loaf sugar, chocolate, cheese, and linen, while in 1777, she borrowed cash on several occasions sometimes for unspecified purposes, but also for payments for loads of wood, sweeping chimneys, shoes for her slaves, or to repay loans from other people. She bought no imported food items from Philip Cuyler after the war began, although she certainly could have been buying goods from someone in addition to Cuyler. Even if that were the case, the war figured largely in this rearrangement of her purchasing habits.<sup>13</sup>

The war triggered changes in the retailing trade in Schenectady as well as Albany. John Bradt, who changed the

---

<sup>13</sup> Account Against the Estate of Margaret Schuyler, 1765-1786, Schuyler Family Papers, AIHA.

nature of his retailing business several times during his career, switched from selling consumer goods to selling drinks and "pudding" largely to local men, some of whom had acquired military titles over the years. Consequently, his female clientele diminished significantly. The only woman who appeared in his accounts for these years did not buy a drink or food as the male customers did, but instead borrowed cash.<sup>14</sup> The conversion of a retailing business to an establishment that excluded women from its day to day trade contributed to the long process that defined the new perimeters of a domestic sphere.

One key to economic survival in Albany lay in the merging of households. Mothers moved in with sons or daughters, sisters accepted their siblings into their households, brothers took in their sisters as housekeepers. Margarita Cuyler Ten Broeck, in her eighties when the war began, welcomed home daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Forty years old in 1776, Jannetie Van Alen Lyle moved in with her brothers during the war and continued to share their house for many years, despite the fact that one of them, John Van Alen, spent time in Canada after being forced to leave Albany as a Tory sympathizer. Jannetie Lyle, the daughter of trader Anna Van Alen, was not helpless

---

<sup>14</sup> John Bradt Account Book, Schenectady, 1762-1817, NYSL.

or ignorant of commerce, however. As a young woman, she had bought goods in her own name from Elizabeth Schuyler Sanders. Her deceased husband left her with money, as had her parents. Her brothers, neither married, were successful sloop owners.<sup>15</sup> Many of the women left on their own in Albany managed in part because they owned property, or had close relatives who could help them out.

Albany records tell rather more about the relatively well-to-do than those who struggled, giving the impression that most of the women who lived on their own had financial resources that carried them through the war. A few however worked to support themselves, in the case of Jane Doty, by washing clothes. Family resources could buffer some of the tenuous economic conditions of the time. Catharine Ten Broeck Wray used her family inheritance to support herself and her daughter, while waiting for permission to join her husband in New York City, permission that never came. In the meanwhile, she shared household with a widow. Her family money may have provided her with the autonomy she needed to live indefinitely without her husband. Despite the fact that he settled in Washington County by 1780, she

---

<sup>15</sup> Bielinski, "Women Alone," 7; Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, Albany County Sessions, 1778-1781 (hereafter CDDC Minutes), Victor Hugo Paltsits, ed. (Albany, NY: State of New York, 1909), 175, 191, 835.

did not join him. He apparently visited her more than once, but ultimately she stayed in Albany and he started a new family.<sup>16</sup>

By 1775, many loyalists of Albany, Schenectady, and from west along the Mohawk Valley had decided to vacate their lands and head to Canada. Loyalists continued throughout the war years to trickle to Canada, sometimes waiting for a white flag to travel under, sometimes simply walking there. The increasingly virulent rhetoric that swept through the Hudson-Mohawk area of New York triggered many localized conflicts, causing Richard Cartwright to call his home "a Place where Discord reigned and all the miseries of Anarchy had long prevailed." Very likely the anarchy and discord that Cartwright referred to had something to do with the activities of the Albany County Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, a group that decided the future of many loyalists, rendering judgment on who should go to jail or to Canada, or who could stay at home. Cartwright's father was one who eventually was forced to leave, so presumably the younger Richard felt under some pressure to remove himself also.<sup>17</sup>

Legally, those who left after 1778 needed the

---

<sup>16</sup> Bielinski, "Women Alone," 12, 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Cartwright, "Journey to Canada," 1.

permission of the Commissioners for Conspiracies or the Governor or both, depending on the particulars of their situation. Of course when British troops were relatively nearby, the trip was not as big a problem as subsequently. Richard Cartwright, who traveled with his young niece, experienced little difficulty in making his way to the British lines when he fled in 1779, despite traveling in wintry weather and accompanied by his nine- or ten-year-old niece. Lady Polly Johnson wrote of having to disguise herself and her children, and evading her would-be captors. Catalina Butler, the wife of Colonel John Butler, on the other hand, never did make her own way to Canada but was sent as part of a prisoner exchange five years after her husband fled.<sup>12</sup>

Hudson-Mohawk women who left New York saw their lives changed not only because of the move and their loss of property, but also because of the new community in which they found themselves. Although some groups traveled together to Canada, and often settled together, they still included only a portion of their original neighborhood. The several families from Schoharie who settled together in

---

<sup>12</sup> Lady Polly's Journal: Narrative of Lady Johnson, nd., Mss. property of Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, (photostat at NAC); Sir Frederick Haldimand Papers, NAC, B104, p. 96, Haldimand to Col. Bolton, Quebec, April 16, 1780.

Canada constituted only a small group from their home. Cristina Tice and her sister stayed near each other once they had left Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley for Canada, but another sister stayed behind. For the loyalist women who fled New York, either with or without their husbands at their sides, the loss of established networks of friends and relations created a difficult burden. But for many, those ties had long since been damaged, to the point where leaving became a relief. In 1785, after the active hostilities had ceased and on the eve of her family's departure for the St. Lawrence Valley, a Broadalbin woman wrote of the stresses that the political situation had created in her life, "I love friendship and neighborly kindness, and I am so glad there will be no more taunting among the elders, no more bickering among the children."<sup>13</sup> Over the ensuing years spent as refugees in Canada, some personal ties could be reforged, but the land settlements offered by the British government disrupted those ties once again.

According to Nancy Jean Cameron, writing in 1785, the group that left Broadalbin consisted mainly of people of Scotch origin. Loyalism in New York, however, crossed ethnic and racial lines, drawing in not only those of British origin, but those of Dutch, African, and Native

---

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Jean Cameron (Mrs. John) to Margaret McPherson, Broadalbin, May 15, 1785, typescript at NAC.

American backgrounds as well. A list of people banished from New York included some with English surnames and some with Dutch surnames. This list included only the most prominent loyalists, but the minutes of the Commissioners on Conspiracies suggests that the interests of loyalists crossed both cultural and socio-economic boundaries.<sup>30</sup>

Upon arrival in Canada or at Fort Niagara, instead of being tied to the hierarchy of a local community, loyalist refugees found themselves dealing directly with an occupying army, with its own distinct hierarchy. The principal authoritative relationship for loyalists in Canada was with the British government via the British Army. Groups of men all had to deal with the military authorities, yet they usually had friends and acquaintances in the regiment that they were attached to, most often people they had known for years. Women, on the other hand, did not always arrive in groups, nor did they necessarily enjoy the steady support of a comparable circle of women. Nevertheless, the British Army dominated their experiences as well as those of the men.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> List of Persons Banished from the State of New York, 1779, DePeyster Family Papers, NYSL; Alice P. Kenney, Stubborn for Liberty: The Dutch in New York (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 174-182.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," WMQ 3rd Ser. 33(1976):386-409.



The British Army of the eighteenth century was a large and relatively efficient bureaucracy.<sup>22</sup> As with all bureaucratic institutions, the British Army had a culture and rules of its own, drawing upon but not reflecting in every detail the society around it. The main agenda of the army was not aiding distraught and homeless people, but conducting a war. However, the Army was peculiarly well-suited to the distribution of money and aid over a large geographic area. The Army also actively maintained a system for the enforcement of simple social rules for large numbers of people. Many areas of behavior, such as sex, could not be completely controlled by army rules, but by controlling the purse-strings, the Army could effectively dictate the rules of work for many.<sup>23</sup>

The British Army was responsible for the vast majority of the expenditures of the British government in the eighteenth century, and, not coincidentally, had established a comprehensive system of accounts. No other British agency had either the financial sophistication or the distribution

---

<sup>22</sup> For more on the development of the military bureaucracy and the economic importance of the British military, see John Brewer, The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Myna Trustram, Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ch.1.

system to offer any kind of large scale assistance to the loyalists who flocked to Canada having left much of their property behind. That assistance, however, came with strings attached, namely that loyalist refugees, men and women, follow certain rules of behavior, especially regarding work, as set up by the Army.

The rules for men and women proved quite different, as the military experience for men functioned quite differently for men than for women. The history and traditions of the British military regarding women shaped much of the daily economic experience of loyalist women as they waited in Canada for a resolution to the war. The positions taken by the army regarding the place women reinforced existing gender-determined work experiences of men and women. As soldiers, whether engaged in the work of maintaining camps, or participating in expeditions, the wartime activities of men occurred in a world largely inaccessible to women.<sup>24</sup>

As the Army became more professional over the course of the 1700s, it sought ways to keep those women's services that they deemed necessary, while eliminating those women

---

<sup>24</sup> For a different perspective on the experiences of loyalist women, see Mary Beth Norton, "American Women in Peace and War." She concentrates on the perceptions held by loyalist women of their economic power. Her book, The British-Americans: Loyalists Exiles in England, 1774-1789 (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1972) discusses the experiences of Loyalists who left for England.

and their services that they deemed extravagant and unnecessary, not to mention hazardous to the troops. The high command preferred fewer women, in more tightly defined roles and with clearly defined compensation, than had existed in earlier armies. Figuring out how to deal with hundreds of extra women cost considerable time and energy, not to mention money. Twenty years earlier during the Seven Years' War, the British Army also had attempted to integrate its vision of what women meant to the army, with what the Army meant to women serving it.<sup>25</sup> For the most part, this meant the evolution of a policy that made use of women without actually being supportive of them or encouraging them. The women who worked for the Army belonged to the Army in the sense that they had to do what the Army ordered, but in return, the women of the Army could expect to be ignored whenever possible.

To the daughter or wife of a British Army officer stationed in Albany and Schenectady, the British Army

---

<sup>25</sup> Sylvia Frey discusses dependents of British soldiers in The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1981), 17-20; For more on women and the Continental Army see Holly A. Mayer, Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), esp. ch. 4; For a valuable summary of women and the European military see Barton C. Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 6(1981): 643-671.

clearly meant something different than it did to the women brought over from England and then forced to remain in Albany while their men went on to Ticonderoga. Certainly, the women who died with the soldiers in battles with various Indian groups had a different perspective on war than the officers' wives remaining in Philadelphia and New York. During the Seven Years' War, the British command spoke in no uncertain terms about the duties of army women. Women attached to regiments in Albany needed to make themselves available for nursing duties. Anyone who refused would be drummed out of the city and not allowed to return. The army here made sure that its women accepted the military as having the ultimate authority.<sup>46</sup>

The widow Sarah McGinnes (sometimes Maginn) received aid from the British government largely because of services she rendered in dealing with Iroquois allies. Her daughters, however, were another matter. As Daniel Claus described to General Haldimand, he had found lodging for Mrs. McGinnes, but her married daughters needed help. They

---

<sup>46</sup> Carol C. Deakin, "Support Personnel: Women with General Braddock's Forces," James Allen Braden, ed., Alexandria: Empire to Commonwealth: Proceedings of Northern Virginia Studies Conference, 1983 (Alexandria, VA: Northern Virginia Community College, 1984); Orderly Book 1, 1758, Montrossor Family Papers, Photostats. See the orders for May 14, 19 and June 5, 1758. Also see "The Moneypenny Orderly Book," Fort Ticonderoga Museum Bulletin, 12 (1966-70), 328-357, 434-461, for the same dates.

had lost their firewood allotment, which they needed with winter coming on, and "having no Money or Income but what they earn by the Needle and which after an easy Way of Life touches very sore." The two Mrs. Thomsons (they had married brothers) had not been brought up to actually support themselves and it seemed unfair to Daniel Claus for the army suddenly to require that they do so.<sup>27</sup> Having no personal acquaintance with the daughters, representatives of the army did not necessarily feel the same way.

The army treated the firewood allotments sought by the Thomsons rather more strictly than they did allowances for provisions, perhaps because of the expense and labor required for accumulating the wood. While hundreds might receive food, many fewer received firewood. In Montreal for instance, in 1782, only 20 people were on the list for firewood. The list included five old men (infirm or lame), two men employed by the Loyalist office, six widows (most sickly), two other sickly women, one set of orphans, two Pensioners, one sickly and distressed family and one woman who got half a cord of wood because of an old order. The difficulties in obtaining firewood meant that the military could draw up much tighter rules for supplying wood than

---

<sup>27</sup> Haldimand Papers, B114, p. 13, Daniel Claus to Haldimand, 19 Nov 1778.

food.<sup>26</sup> In the earlier years of the war, the policy of the British Army was to provide food and fuel to women and veterans who needed the help. By 1780, the Army struggled to define who should receive aid and who should not, and exactly what form that aid should take.

Sick & Infirm Women with Young Children or those whom from their Situation Cannot go out to service Instead of lowing Them Lodgings or Lodging many separately to be Placed together in One or Two Houses would be a Considerable Saving...The Garrison Surgeon could then visit them Daily with Ease & a Person Inspect them & get them out to Service when Recovered- some of those might also be Usefully Employed in Making blanketts Coats Leggings &c at a Fixt and Cheaper Rate than Canadians.<sup>27</sup>

By forcing the women to live together, in what was essentially a barracks, the army hoped to extend to these dependents the same control that it had over soldiers: the power to decide what work a person should do and to determine when a person was well enough to work. Though quick enough to notice an unexploited labor force, the army's limited imagination failed to envision any way other than traditional women's work, that woman dependents could earn their keep.

---

<sup>26</sup> Haldimand Papers, B165, p. 3, Return of Royalists who are Intitled to House Rent & Firewood from Governmt till further Orders at Montreal, Commcg 1st of Jan 1782.

<sup>27</sup> Haldimand Papers, B165, p. 5, Royalists on Their First Comeing into This Province to give an Acct of the Trades or Professions, n.d.

Long established habits of the British military demanded that any woman with a connection to the army must be useful to the army in some way. Clearly recognizing the distinction between the ornamental roles of the officer's wives and the useful, if unappealing, roles of women who worked for the army as laundresses and cooks, military life exaggerated class differences by limiting women to two simple categories. Ornaments served one purpose, common working women another. This dichotomy was applied to the refugee loyalists. Some women were worthy of assistance, others, largely because of their socio-economic status, were not. Women who had worked their whole lives should expect to keep working. The military reflected some of the basic characteristics of the larger society but without the subtleties and variations that existed outside of the armed forces. Attitudes towards productive living clearly did not extend to the wives and daughters of wealthy men. The wives and daughters of Sir John Johnson, Daniel Claus, and Guy Johnson, for instance, never faced the same directives about work that other women did.

In regard to the Families attached to the provincial Corps drawing Provisions, His Excellency was pleased to grant a certain Latitude in consequence of a Representation by Sir John Johnson setting forth that many of his Corps had families, who formerly lived in affluence and were totally unable to exist upon the Ration of their Husbands, but this Indulgence is only to extend to those Objects when necessities absolutely require

it."<sup>30</sup>

British headquarters discriminated plainly between those who ought to work and those who, by virtue of their gentle backgrounds, could not be expected to labor in any way.

Headquarters clearly did not want people to abuse this system, those who merely had pretensions to leisure should be discovered. The same letter mentioned a regulation that excluded from provisioning those of "both Sexes who are able and have been used to Labour... Reforms may still be made by striking off many young People who ought to earn their Livelyhood and Girls who marry." Captain Mathews continued, "the Allowance of Provisions while it alleviates the Distresses of many Loyalists in this Province, is the Cause of Indolence in many, who would otherwise live better, and become useful Members of Society."<sup>31</sup> Giving too much to the wrong people, according to the British, only gave young people an excuse not to work.

A list of Loyalists in Canada receiving provisions in 1779 totalled 853, including 199 women. Many of these women (111) relied on themselves and the King for support, somewhat fewer (88) had husbands who received subsistence

---

<sup>30</sup> Haldimand Papers, B165, p. 25, R. Mathews to A. Cuyler, Quebec, 18 Nov 1782.

<sup>31</sup> Haldimand Papers, B165, p. 26. This line of reasoning should sound familiar to anyone who has followed debates about welfare in recent years.



for one reason or another, and also held a job, usually with the Army. In 1780, these numbers had grown to include 493 women, the vast majority of whom did not have husbands in residence.<sup>32</sup> By the middle of 1781, with the numbers of loyalist dependents continuing to grow, the superiors of the British Army decided to draw the line at providing for people who could work but did not. In particular, the Army expressed concern about young women who received provisions unnecessarily,

I am directed to transmit to Headquarters a Return of the Young Women of the Loyalists who are able to work and hitherto accustomed to earn their bread by Labour. In consequence of this Order great pains have been taken not only to discover those who come under the above discription but also the young men who have no great claim to receive their provisions...I have ordered all those to be struck off the provision List on the 1st August.<sup>33</sup>

Young women comprised the lion's share of those struck off the list following the orders from headquarters. The return reduced the provision list throughout the various stations in Canada by 41 men and boys and 82 women and girls. Virtually all of the females taken off the list were between 13 and 20 years old. Younger unmarried women of

---

<sup>32</sup> Haldimand Papers, B166, p. 18-22, An Effective List of all the Loyalists in Canada receiving Provisions from the King's Line, from 25th July to 24th Aug., 1779.

<sup>33</sup> Haldimand Papers, B161, p. 266, John Nairne to Haldimand, Verchere, July 29, 1781.

lower status received less protection and less attention than did others. Of the males, 4 were men aged 40 or over while the rest were boys between the ages of 11 and 17. The order that directed the culling of people from the list of those receiving aid specifically directed the army's attention towards young women, demanding that those who could work take part in supporting themselves. Young women who might have been working at home, accumulating goods for upcoming marriages, had, in Canada, lost both resources and any outside support.<sup>34</sup>

A steady job with the military proved no guarantee of security for Elizabeth Clarke. The daughter of a lieutenant in the army, and well-known in Dublin, Ireland, she had left Dublin and sailed to Philadelphia to serve a Captain John Collet. However, after having "served with on Captain John Collet for the space of seven years at the rate of Fourteen pounds per annum," she was "left last year by the said Capt Collet in Quebec without having paid her any part of her wages for the said space of seven years." Now, "an orphan, forlorn and destitute," she turned to the army for assistance.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Haldimand Papers, B166, p. 54, Return of Loyalists to be Struck Off of the Provision List, Aug. 1, 1781.

<sup>35</sup> Haldimand Papers, B217, The Memorial of Elizabeth Clarke, Sept. 6, 1780.

Women had few options for employment, but plenty of financial need. A list from July 1st, 1779 shows women in the following occupations: laborer (6), artificer (2), handmaid (1), ferry attendant (1) and schoolmaster (1) as well as one singlewomen and five widows.<sup>36</sup> The few opportunities to work steadily consisted primarily of jobs that depended on the presence of the military. Even the work of a laborer depended on the building activities of the army. Some young women perhaps obtained work making the "blanketts Coats and Leggings" to supply the army, perhaps at a "Fixt and Cheaper Rate" than local men and women, as desired by the army.

The challenges faced by women in negotiating the new economic landscape dominated by war and armies are expressed in the experiences of Mary Graham Tuttle, sometime resident of Albany. Though by no means representative of all Loyalist refugees, the conflicts Mary Tuttle engaged in with her husband Stephen Tuttle and the British Army reflect the parameters of British army attitudes towards the support of

---

<sup>36</sup> Haldimand Papers, B166, p. 10-13, An Effective List of All the Loyalists in Canada receiving Provisions from the King's Line, Sorel, July 1, 1779. An artificer is someone who worked in ordnance or artillery for the military. Three women were also listed as having husbands who were artificers. I found no evidence at the National Archives of Canada that the work of women refugees became integrated into the local economy, which is not to say such evidence does not exist elsewhere.

non-elite women and what that meant economically to those women. Mary Tuttle's position in her household changed, not just once, but several times, as the conditions of war forced her to renegotiate her place relative to her husband amid the expectations of the military bureaucracy.

The relationship between Stephen Tuttle and Mary Graham began in Albany County in the late 1770s. The two had a child baptized in Albany in 1778, but the date of their marriage is not clear. In May of 1779, Tuttle left Albany County for Canada, leaving behind his wife and "a Large Family of small Children," suggesting a relationship of some duration. In September of 1779, Mary Tuttle's brother, a Major in the American Army, requested that his sister and her children be allowed to join Tuttle in Canada, claiming that his sister had "little to support her and must from her present Inability if not Removed shortly become a Burthen to the community." Whether these letters were Mary Tuttle's idea, or whether her brother wanted her off his hands is not clear. Her later relationship with Stephen Tuttle suggests that she either did not want to go to him, or that she harbored some deep animosity towards her husband, perhaps because he had abandoned her, or because of his behavior once she arrived in Canada. Unfortunately, the documents do

not tell her side of this story.<sup>37</sup>

By mid-1781, Mary Tuttle had made her way to Canada, and (perhaps unwillingly) joined her spouse. In July of 1781, her husband wrote to General Haldimand of his ongoing difficulties with his wife.

I take the freedom of troubling you once more with my unhappy circumstance. my wife not contented with leaving of me with about £ 130 pounds to pay for her extravagant behaviour in the event of last winter but still persists my further pain- the last winter she suplyed Rebels & spys with the money that I must now pay.

Mary Tuttle claimed to her husband that while he was away with the loyalist troops, she had sheltered a rebel spy and supplied him with "necessaries." She now challenged him openly by agreeing that she had willingly put him into debt, and not only that, had done so in the service of her husband's enemies. After creating this uproar, she resisted her husband's attempts to reconcile with her (or so he said) and abandoned her family. Stephen Tuttle warned Haldimand to expect a visit from his wife, having no doubt that she would attempt to get Tuttle's pay for herself, adding, "I beg that you may cause her to be taken as little notice of as possible."<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York (Albany: State of New York, 1900), 273-277; CAP file.

<sup>38</sup> Haldimand Papers, B161, p. 258, Stephen Tuttle to Haldimand, Sorel, July 11, 1781. Since I do not know precisely when Mary Tuttle arrived in Canada, it is not

After stopping at Machiche, Mary Tuttle remained unable to support herself. Assuming perhaps that she deserved the assistance of the British government no matter where she lived, Tuttle claimed free provisions. The British Army, however, had little tolerance for those who did not follow the rules, nor were they about to supply the needs of a woman who broke away from her connection to the military. The local authorities struck her from the list as a runaway from her husband and family quarters.<sup>39</sup> This economic setback sparked a reunion with Mr. Tuttle. By the middle of August, Mary Tuttle had not only returned to her husband but recanted her earlier claims to aiding the enemy. As Stephen Tuttle wrote to Captain Mathews,

Concerning what I wrote you Respecting my wife  
aiding & assisting Rebbles & spyes. She has since  
made a humble Confession & Declares she never done  
anything Like it in her Life, But what she said  
was Intirely to agrevate me as she noing my  
Principels thought nothing could Provoak me more  
that & now is very sorry for what she has done.<sup>40</sup>

After attempting to claim autonomy through expenditures and political action, Mary Tuttle's very real economic

---

clear whether her alleged actions took place in Albany County, New York or Canada.

<sup>39</sup> Haldimand Papers, B166, p. 54, Return of Loyalists to be Struck Off of the Provision List, Aug. 1, 1781. This document lists Mrs. Tuttle's age as 30 years old.

<sup>40</sup> Haldimand Papers, B161, p. 275, S. Tuttle to Capt. Mathews, Aug. 13, 1781.

dependence forced her to return and apologize, even causing her to disclaim her previous actions. Perhaps she never did help the rebel Americans, but she certainly knew that to even claim to have done so was to deny her husband's authority, something she clearly wanted to do. She might have been able to snub Mr. Tuttle in his position as her husband, but the larger institutional and economic force of the army stopped her in her tracks. The army had the social authority and the communication system in place to control the movements of errant and non-contributing women.

Mrs. Tuttle did not have long to worry about tolerating her husband; he died by the end of 1781. At the beginning of 1782, she collected the provisions due her as a widow of a helpful loyalist. Once her husband had died, she had a legitimate excuse for being on her own, one that proved acceptable to the military.<sup>42</sup>

Mary Tuttle's difficulties originated in her relationship with her husband but other loyalist wives faced different challenges. Some, having fled to Canada to join their husbands, encountered another enforced separation upon arrival. The men generally joined the provincial forces or attached themselves in other ways to the British Army,

---

<sup>42</sup> Haldimand Papers, B166, Return of Loyalists and Families who Received their Provisions Gratis, 25 Dec 1781 to 24 Jan'y 1782.

giving themselves an income and access to necessities, but often not allowing them time for their families. Once wives and children arrived in Canada, togetherness frequently remained out of reach. In mid-1779, of 221 women receiving provisions from the King, 103 of them did not have husbands on the list. By early 1782, the total number of women on the provisioning list had jumped to 483, 417 of whom were alone. Not all of these women were widows, although some were. Most simply faced the war years in Canada without the physical presence and support of a husband. In 1780, the formerly prosperous Cartwright family of Albany connections saw elderly parents living with their daughter, while her husband had returned home. Meanwhile, her brother, a refugee himself, had left those same parents to the care of the army, while he moved on to Nova Scotia. For that family, governmental support became critical, due in part to the lack of opportunity open to the women of the family.<sup>42</sup>

The years of actual fighting were not the only years that many women spent alone. The end of the war, however, did succeed in changing the proportions of women alone, if not the actual number. In 1784, there still remained several hundred Loyalist stragglers in Montreal alone, with nearly equal numbers of men and women. A number of women,

---

<sup>42</sup> George MacBeath to John Porteous, Montreal, June 12, 1780, Porteous Papers.



children, and men on the list also were described as being sick. Years of living hand to mouth, scrambling for firewood left many people weakened and open to illness. Unable to support themselves, these refugees continued to require assistance from the Crown.<sup>43</sup>

Once the land settlements had begun, men often went ahead to the land, leaving wives, children, and parents alone, sometimes for months. Many of those listed in the returns of 1784 were women waiting to join their husbands on land deeded but not yet settled. Of the 119 women listed on the return, 20 had been left behind while their husbands went ahead to their land, another six were widows, and five more were simply alone for unspecified reasons. The army, at least in Montreal, had succeeded in dissociating themselves from the large numbers of dependent women while maintaining their ties to the men that had served the military in some way.

As the war came to a close and the British army reduced their presence, the loyalists who planted themselves in Canada struggled to recreate the lives they had abandoned. Those people who had seen themselves as people of power and influence, such as the Johnsons and the Butlers, tried to

---

<sup>43</sup> Loyalist Stragglers in Montreal, Sept.-Oct., 1784, transcribed from the Haldimand Papers by E. Keith Fitzgerald, typescript, NAC.

maintain that position, sometimes without success.<sup>44</sup> Other women drew on their past working lives. Cristina Van Slyke Tice recreated some aspects of her life in Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley. As the wife of Gilbert Tice, she lived with economic uncertainty in New York, sewing and running their inn at Johnstown, while her husband had occasional difficulties with creditors. Gilbert left the Mohawk Valley in 1775, with other loyalists from the Indian Department formerly headed by Sir William Johnson, but Cristina remained behind for several years. She and her close female relatives signed a receipt borrowing money from Andries Truax in 1776, suggesting that she and her sisters faced straightened circumstances brought about by the war. In August of 1778, she wrote to the Commissioners on Conspiracies requesting permission to travel to Canada with her family, and soon thereafter appeared before them to make her request in person. The Tices eventually achieved an economic security in Canada that had eluded them in New York. After Gilbert's death, his wife took in guests, perhaps drawing from her own pre-war experiences to take

---

<sup>44</sup> The Butlers and the Johnsons were relatively successful at maintaining their status but others had more trouble. Ann Gorman Condon, "The Family in Exile: Loyalist Social Values after the Revolution," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995), pp. 42-53.

care of herself.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly the war served as a major disruption in the lives of both women and men in New York. Cast adrift in a strange place, many loyalist women, as historian Mary Beth Norton has shown, faced obstacles in carrying on with their lives. Unfamiliar with their husband's properties and businesses, they could only imagine the value of what they had left behind. This lack of familiarity with their husbands' businesses did not mean, however, that these women were helpless, as Norton points out.<sup>46</sup> In fact, women of all backgrounds grappled with material issues on a daily basis, thoroughly engaged with the economy.

"Societies at war," writes historian Linda Kerber, "are societies engaged in a redefinition of gender relations."<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Receipt of Andries Truax, Schenectady, June 3, 1776 (in Dutch), Truax Family Papers, NYSL; CDDC, 203, 222; Ernest Green, "Gilbert Tice, U.E.," Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society, 21(1924):186-197.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," WMQ 3rd Ser. 33(1976): 386-409, 406.

<sup>47</sup> Linda Kerber, "'I Have Don Much to Carrey on the Warr': Women and the Shaping of Republican Ideology After the American Revolution," in Women and Politics in the Age of the Democratic Revolution, ed. Applewhite and Levy, p. 227-253. The renegotiation of gender relations during times of war has inspired a substantial literature that examines many different wars. See for instance, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), a collection of essays.

The terms of this redefinition did not serve, however, to empower women, or to bring their work more into line with that of men. For instance, when married women's work and responsibilities expanded to include being in charge of the family farm or household as a result of the war, women may have assumed a masculine role, but they did not do men's work alongside men. At the same time, men's roles or duties shifted away from home and towards serving the war effort. The war emphasized, rather than blurred, the differences between the duties of men and women.

### Conclusion

The Hudson-Mohawk frontier of eighteenth-century New York made both a boundary and a meeting place for several cultures. Settled in the seventeenth-century by the Dutch, this part of New York had long been occupied by Iroquoian tribes. Among the black and white people who lived in Albany, Schenectady, and the Mohawk Valley between 1740 and 1780, Indians remained a familiar, though always potentially dangerous, presence. Trade between these groups was the backbone of the frontier economy and remained so well into the eighteenth century, even after the influx of Anglo-

Americans had begun to dilute the local Dutch culture. As the trade of borderland New York evolved, it incorporated women of various ethnic backgrounds and their work. The character of women's work conformed to the specific conditions of the economy, but individual experiences remained tempered by family conditions and life-cycle.

The shops and retail spaces of colonial New York provided a common ground where women and their work encountered the more visible, male-dominated economy. As recorded in the account books, women took part in many aspects of local commerce. As retailers, women took part in the world of business and accounts. The account book of Elizabeth Sanders provides the means to discuss the relationship between her retailing and her marriage. Marriage and her "business" emerge as enterprises in service to each other, and not in conflict.

Despite their well-recorded separation from much of men's business, New York's colonial women did not live apart from men, or from the overall economic system. Women actively joined in with the consumer economy of eighteenth-century New York, connecting with the male-dominated commercial world at an important place- the store or shop of the retail trader. There, local women found a bridge to work, to goods that entertained, and to social contacts with other people. These activities did not give women freedom

from their other duties, or noticeably expand their rights.

Women's work formed an important part of the fabric of this economy dominated by trade and commerce. Responding to altering political conditions, white women accommodated themselves to change by modifying their production of butter, to wampum, to outwork sewing, and finally, to spinning. As people who made payments, women produced goods and services to exchange for cash and goods. Here, women's participation required flexibility as the demands of the market for their products changed repeatedly.

The economic experiences of women were as diverse as their ethnic backgrounds and social positions. For women of wealth and position, such as Margaret Schuyler and Elizabeth Sanders, the third quarter of the eighteenth century, contained many challenges (including sudden death) and a few commercial opportunities, especially for the well-to-do widow. For other women, of both Dutch and British descent, the times carried other economic challenges, without the same opportunity. Poor women could face abandonment, temporary or permanent. For black women, engagement with the commercial economy of New York was possible, but in a very limited way. African-American women, unable to control much of their time, did control the products of some kinds of labor, such as gardening, and used the fruits of this labor to buy consumer goods for themselves. Their purchases

enabled them to build or maintain their status. The result never was empowerment as a white man might see it, but consumption on a small scale certainly meant self-expression and a measure of status within the local black community.

As purchasers, women took part in the consumer transformation of the eighteenth century, adjusting their purchases to their domestic needs, and their personal situations. Widows took full advantage of their ability to choose and buy goods as they chose, while married women shopped with much less frequency, than did their husbands. Over time, single women began to enter the stores in a trickle, carefully selecting items that served to decorate or embellish their dress.

The connection of Iroquois women to trade drew them into shops and transactions with traders as well. Some Iroquois women sewed Indian shoes for cash, among other activities, and at least one traded rum to further her own interests. Sally Montour traveled between Indian and white worlds while Molly Brant lived with a white man, buying goods at local stores. They, and other Native-American women, showed profound ties to New York commerce. They employed these ties to reinforce their own identities as Indians, manipulating the material culture of the white world to serve their own designs.

The world outside the retail stores was not a placid

one. Wars, demographic upheaval, and economic change rocked local society. In order to maintain any sort of equilibrium, women living through these conditions needed to regularly make corrections in their work and their social habits. The Seven Years' War and later, the American Revolution, both had major effects on the local economy, and the lives of local women. To women, as well as to men, these changes meant an ongoing adaptation of work patterns to the needs of the day. Demographic forces, such as age and cultural background, acted in concert with economic and social position in determining which women participated most fully in the local exchange system.

The American Revolution dramatically changed the working lives of women of all backgrounds in New York. Here, perhaps the most important variable in shaping a woman's experience was whether her family chose the American or the Loyalist side in the struggle. The war uprooted people from both sides, but many Loyalists, whether white, Indian, or black, ended up in permanent exile from their homes. Albany and Schenectady, disrupted as they were, faced nothing like the chaos of the Mohawk Valley, which became the battleground in a border war. The relative security of these towns, however, could not disguise the abrupt transformation of a commercial economy from a consumer orientation to a military focus. This trend left



women without very much to buy, and with few marketable skills.

The type of work available to women after the war continued to reflect a woman's marital circumstances. If a husband or father had stature and money, then duties remained largely domestic. Single women and married women had slightly different choices, but clear boundaries marked the limits of what each could do. If male householders could not support a family, then wives and daughters worked outside the home or brought outside work in. When women found themselves without the support of a man, they did not necessarily jump right in and start supporting themselves and certainly did not really do this on men's terms. Rather, they first worked out what steps needed to be taken and then adapted their own work to the situation. As "silent partners" implies, women played an important and largely overlooked role in the resiliency of the New York economy.

The fact that women lost some access to the commercial world of men during the Revolution does not imply that they lost access either absolutely or permanently. The outwork sewing networks may have disappeared from the account books in Albany and Schenectady, but historian Christine Stansell has shown how outwork sewing survived in New York City,

providing meager earnings for numerous women.<sup>45</sup> Women's roles in the production of textiles and yarns also rebounded developed in the years following the revolution, in at least some regions. When John Smith bought "12 pairs wool cards" from William Kane in 1780, the women in his family may well have been about to undertake some intensive preparation for spinning.<sup>46</sup> Just so the abrupt loss of merchandise during the war cut women off from the activity of shopping. Women had made purchases before the revolution, but they bought things for themselves, and did not do the bulk of the household shopping. After the war receded from New York, women visited retailers once again.

Elizabeth Sanders did not live long enough to witness the changes that accompanied the Revolution. Most of her children did not live long enough to see them either. Only two of her children, both daughters, survived to marry. Her older daughter, Maria Sanders, born in 1749, married at the age of nineteen into the Van Rensselaer family of Albany. The couple spent the first years of their marriage in an old Dutch house very like the one her parents had lived in;

---

<sup>45</sup> Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 106-108.

<sup>46</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth-Century New England," WMO 3rd Ser. 55(1998): 1-38; William Kane Day Book, Albany, 1764-1792, NYSL.

perhaps it was her parents' house. Her husband, Philip Van Rensselaer, took over the remains of Robert Sanders's business, a business Maria Sanders was very familiar with. She and her husband retained a substantial amount of the furniture and decorative items inherited from her parents, passing these items along to future generations.<sup>50</sup>

The house built by Maria and Philip Van Rensselaer on their farm then just outside the city of Albany and known as Cherry Hill, provides an apt metaphor for the changing economic lives of New York women. The construction of the house in 1787, made use of both new and old building traditions. Although laid out as a Georgian-style house, with Georgian-inspired interior trim and mouldings, Cherry Hill contains some basic structural features tied to the Dutch building conventions of New York. The roof, for instance, is a gambrel roof, "already old-fashioned in 1787," but typical of Dutch roofs built earlier in the century. The furnishings of the house similarly betray an attachment to the past coupled with an appreciation of the present.

---

<sup>50</sup> Her children survived at a much better rate than did her mother's. Of her mother's eight children, only two survived to adulthood. Maria Sanders Van Rensselaer bore twelve, all but three of whom grew up. The information in these paragraphs is drawn from Roderic H. Blackburn, Cherry Hill: The History and Collections of a Van Rensselaer Family (Albany, NY: Historic Cherry Hill, 1976), 9-11, 22-23, 66-69, 102, 113.

The ways that women lived out their economic lives embodied this meshing of customary practices with the demands of the present. If we explore the details of women's engagement with the economy, we can see that the elasticity of roles required to deal with changes of the moment drew from the traditions of women's work. This is true not only for the women of Dutch and English backgrounds, but for those of African-American and Native-American heritage as well. Women of all ages and cultures are, to some extent, economic beings. Surviving in a changing world means building with today's materials on an existing foundation, using skills that one already has but in a fresh way. Just so did the women of frontier New York cope with the difficulties of war and a transfigured commerce, by applying customary work to address new economic concerns.

## Bibliography

### Unprinted Primary Sources

#### **New York State Library, Albany, NY.**

Flores Bancker. Memorandum Book, Lansingburgh, 1763-1769.

Arendt Bradt. Account Book, Schenectady, 1737-1749. W.T. Hanson Collection.

John Bradt. Account Book, Schenectady, 1762-.

Breeze Family Receipts, Staats Family Papers.

Thomas Bullman. Memorandum Book, New Forrist, 1764-1769. Horatio Seymour Papers.

John Butler. Account Book, Butlersbury, 1759-1774, W.T. Hanson Collection.

Walter Butler Account Book, 1733-1743, W.T. Hanson Collection.

Daniel Campbell. Account Book (unbound), Schenectady, New York, Detroit, 1761-1765. Campbell Papers.

Daniel Campbell. Account Book, Schenectady, 1761-1765. Campbell Papers.

Campbell & Andrews. Memorandum and Account Book, Schenectady, 1761. Campbell Papers.

Campbell & Andrews. Cash Book, 1765-1766. Campbell Papers.

George Coventry. Cash Book, Albany, 1759.

George Coventry. Receipt Book, Albany, 1759-1760.

Hendrick Douw. Will, 1749. Bratt Family Papers.

Jelles Fonda. Account Book, 1771-1774. Fonda Family Papers.

Jelles Fonda. Memorandum Book of Cattle Bought, 1776-1778.

Fonda Family Papers.

Jelles Fonda. Letter to Peter Yates, 12/28/1786. Fonda Family Papers.

Richard Hewlett. Orderly Book, 1758.

William Kane. Day Book, 1764-1792.

Jacob A. Lansing. Account Book, Halfmoon, 1773. Jacob Lansing Family Papers.

Lansing. Untitled Account Book, Halfmoon/Lansingburgh, 1773. Jacob Lansing Family Papers.

Montessoro Family Papers. Orderly Books, 1758-1759, Photostats.

Reverend John Ogilvie. Diary, 1750-. Typescript

Phyn & Ellice. Account Book, Schenectady, 1767-1768. W.T. Hanson Collection.

Robert Sanders. Account (Day) Book, Albany, 1749-1753. Robert Sanders Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collection.

Robert Sanders. Letterbook, 1758-1765. Robert Sanders Papers, Historic Cherry Hill Collection.

John Stryker. Account Book, 1759-1760, Campbell Family Papers.

Gilbert Tice. Account Book, Johnstown, 1771-1774.

Abraham and Andries Truax. Receipts and Legal Papers. Truax Family Papers.

Samuel Tyms. Day Book, Schenectady, 1762-1768 (Blot Book). Campbell Family Papers.

Unidentified Account Book. Day Book, Schenectady, 1761-1766, (Samuel Tyms). Campbell Family Papers.

Unidentified Account Book. Day Book, Schenectady, 1756-1764. Campbell Family Papers.

Unidentified Account Book. Schenectady, 1761-1768. Daniel Campbell Papers.

Unidentified Account Book. Rensselaer County, 1771-1775.

Unidentified Account Book (typescript). Village of Glen, 1761-1801.

Unidentified Account Book. Schenectady, 1733-1824.

Unidentified Account Book. General Store, Mohawk Valley, 1771-1774 (misidentified as Albany).

Unidentified Account Book of a General Trader. Albany, 1775.

Unidentified Account Book of a Retail Merchant. Day Book, Albany, 1760-1765.

Unidentified Accounts of a Shoemaker. Albany, 1733-1774. Jacob Lansing Family Papers.

Unidentified Schenectady Resident. Account Book.

Martin G. Van Bergen. Day Book, Albany, 1749/50-1765. Van Bergen Family Papers.

Martin G. Van Bergen. Memorandum Book for his Sloop, 1763-1776. Van Bergen Family Papers.

Van Bergen Family Papers. Receipts and Accounts.

Van Dyke Family Papers. Medical Journals and Accounts, Schenectady, 1753-.

Johannes Harmanus Wendell. Ledger, 1741-1744, Schenectady.

Abraham Yates. Account Book, Albany.

Joseph Yates. Account Book, Schenectady, 1749-1769.

**New York Historical Society, New York, NY.**

McCarthy. Bill against McCarthy for passing counterfeit money, 1752. Miscellaneous Mss.

Phyn & Ellice. Shipping Book, Schenectady, 1772-1773.

Barent Sanders. Account Book, Albany, 1746-1759.

John Sanders. Book of Bonds & Notes, Schenectady, 1754-1768.

John Sanders. Ginseng Account Book, 1752.

John Sanders. Ledger, Schenectady, 1749-1783.

John Sanders. Letterbook, 1749-1779.

John Sanders and Jacob Glen. Account & Day Book, Schenectady. 1752-1761 (Glen) and 1765-1771 (Sanders).

Robert Sanders. Letterbook, 1742-1743; 1752-1758.

Mrs. Robert Sanders. Account Book, 1753-1764.

Schenectady, Miscellaneous Manuscripts.

Unidentified Indian Trader of the Mohawk Valley. Account Book, 1762-1776. Found in the papers of Jelles Fonda.

Evert Wendell. Account Book, Albany, 1708-50; 1749-1758.

Evert Wendell. Day Book, Albany, 1717-1745.

#### **National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, ONT.**

John Askins. Account Book, Detroit, 1787-1788. Askins Papers.

John Askins. Ledger, Detroit, 1787. Askins Papers.

Richard Cartwright. "A Journey to Canada," 1779.

William Edgar Letters. 1750-1787, Originals at New York Public Library (photostats at NAC).

Haldimand Papers. Microfilm.

Lady Polly's Journal: Narrative of Lady Johnson, nd., Mss. property of Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, (photostat at NAC).

John Lees. Journal, Quebec, 1768.



Phyn & Ellice. Letterbook, 1767. Microfilm, NAC.

John Porteous Papers. Buffalo & Erie Historical Society, Microfilm, Reel 1, NAC.

#### **Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, NY.**

Stephen Grosbeeck. Will, 1743.

Margaret Schuyler. Account Against her Estate, 1765-1786. Schuyler Family Papers.

David Verplanck Estate. Auction, Coeymans, 1769. Ten Eyck Family Papers.

Robert Sanders. Will, Albany, 1765. Photostat.

#### **Other**

Albany Common Council Minutes, on micro-film, Albany Hall of Records, Albany, NY.

Albany County Court Minutes, on micro-film, Albany Hall of Records, Albany, NY.

Colonial Albany Social History Files, Colonial Albany Project, Albany, NY.

Lord Loudoun's List, 1756, photocopy, Colonial Albany Project(original at Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA).

Family History Files, Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady, NY.

## Printed Primary Sources

Acts of the Assembly Passed in the Province of New York From 1619 to 1718 (London, 1719), American Colonial Records, Micro-film Reel 1.

Albany Gazette, 1771-1772, photostats, Colonial Albany Project, Albany, NY.

Christoph, Florence, Upstate New York in the 1760s: Tax Lists and Selected Militia Rolls of Old Albany County, 1760-1768 (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1992).

Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York (Albany: State of New York, 1900).

Grant, Anne MacVicar, Memoirs of an American Lady with Sketches of manners and Scenes in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972, originally published 1901).

Kalm, Peter, Peter Kalm's Travels in North America, The English Version of 1770, Adolph Benson, trans. and ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1987).

"The Moneypenny Orderly Book," Fort Ticonderoga Museum Bulletin, 12(1966-70), 328-357, 434-461.

Paltsits, Victor Hugo, ed., Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, Albany County Sessions, 1778-1781, (Albany, NY: State of New York, 1909).

Seaver, James E., A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

Smith, Richard, A Tour of the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware in 1769, ed. by Francis W. Halsey (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., 1989).

Sullivan, James, et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965).

## Secondary Sources

### Abbreviations used:

AHR American Historical Review

JAH Journal of American History

WMO William and Mary Quarterly

Anderson, Fred, A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984)

Armour, David Arthur, The Merchants of Albany, New York, 1686-1760 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986).

Axtell, James, The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Baron, Donna Keith, J. Edward Hood, and Holly V. Izard, "They Were Here All Along: The Native American Presence in Lower-Central New England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," WMO 3rd Ser., 53(1996): 561-586.

Baumgarten, Linda, "Plains, Plaids, and Cotton: Woolens for Slave Clothing," Ars Textrina 15(1991): 203-222.

---- "'Clothes for the People': Slave Clothing in Early Virginia," Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts 12(1988): 26-70.

Becker, Marshall J., "Hannah Freeman: An Eighteenth-Century Lenape Living and Working Among Colonial Farmers," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 114(1990): 249-269

Beckles, Hilary McD., Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989)

Berkin, Carol, First Generations: Women in Colonial America (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996).

Berlin, Ira, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the origins of African-American Society in Mainland North

America," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 251-288.

---- "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society," AHR 85(1980)44-78

Berlin, Ira and Philip D. Morgan, The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1991).

Bielinski, Stefan, "How a City Worked: Occupations in Colonial Albany," in A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers edited by Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany, NY: New Netherland Publishing, 1991), pp. 119-136.

Blackburn, Roderic H., Cherry Hill: The History and Collections of a Van Rensselaer Family (Albany, NY: Historic Cherry Hill, 1976).

Blackburn, Roderic H. and Ruth Piwonka, eds. Remembrance of Patria: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America (Albany, NY: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1988).

Bolster, W. Jeffrey, Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Boydston, Jeanne, Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Braund, Kathryn E. Holland, Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1810 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

Breen, T. H., "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," Journal of British Studies 25(1986): 467-499.

---- "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 119 (1988): 73-104.

---- "The Meaning of 'Likeness': American Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," Word and Image 6(1990): 325-350.

---- "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," WMO 3rd Ser. 50(1993): 471-501.

Brewer, John, The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

Brown, Judith K., "Economic Organization and the Position of Women Among the Iroquois," in William Guy Spittal, ed., Iroquois Women: An Anthology (Oshwehen, ONT: Iroqrafts, Ltd., 1990), pp. 182-198.

Burch, Wanda, "Sir William Johnson's Cabinet of Curiosities," New York History 71(1990): 261-282.

Burke, Thomas E., Jr., Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661-1710. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Bushman, Richard L., The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

---- "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," in Ronald Hoffman, Cary Carson, and Peter J. Albert, eds., Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), pp. 233-251.

Calloway, Colin G., The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Carr, Lois Green and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," WMO 3rd. Ser. 34(1977): 542-571.

Christoph, Florence, Schuyler Genealogy: A Compendium of Sources Pertaining to the Schuyler Families in America Prior to 1800 (Albany: Friends of the Schuyler Mansion, 1987).

Christoph, Peter R., "The Colonial Family: Kinship and Power," in Nancy Anne McClure Zeller, ed., A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers (Albany: New Netherland Publishing, 1991), pp. 111-118.

Clark, Christopher, The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

Cleary, Patricia A., "'Who shall say we have not equal abilitys with the Men when Girls of 18 years of age discover such great capacitys?': Women of Commerce in Boston, 1750-1776'," in Conrad Edick Wright and Katelyn Viens, eds., Entrepreneurs: The Boston Business Community, 1700-1850, " (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), pp. 39-62.

Cohen, David Steven, The Dutch-American Farm (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

Condon, Ann Gorman, "The Family in Exile: Loyalist Social Values After the Revolution," in Margaret Conrad, ed., Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995), pp. 42-53.

Countryman, Edward, A People in Revolt: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988).

Croft, Clary and Sharon Croft, "Civilian Everyday Clothing of Adult Planters, 1759-1783," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995), pp. 141-155.

Dayton, Cornelia Hughes, Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

---- "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village," WMO 3rd Ser. 48(1991): 19-49.

Deakin, Carol C., "Support Personnel: Women with Braddock's Forces," Proceedings of Northern Virginia Studies Conference, 1983, edited by James Allen Braden (Alexandria, VA: Northern Virginia Community College, 1984), pp. 85-94.

Dennis, Matthew, Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Dexter, Elizabeth A., Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776 (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1931).

Ditz, Toby L., "Shipwrecked; or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," JAH 81(1994):51-80.

Dublin, Thomas, Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

Dubois, W.E. Burghardt, The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1961, orig. 1903).

Edmonds, Walter D., Drums Along the Mohawk (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1936).

Feister, Lois M. and Bonnie Pulis, "Molly Brant: Her Domestic and Political Roles in Eighteenth-Century New York," in Robert Grumet ed., Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp. 295-320.

Frey, Sylvia, The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1981).

Funk, Elisabeth Paling, "Netherlands' Popular Culture in the Knickerbocker Works of Washington Irving," in New World Dutch Studies: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America 1609-1776, ed. by Roderic H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelley, (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1987), pp. 83-94.

Geertz, Clifford, Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

Goodfriend, Joyce D., "Black Families in New Netherland," in A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers, edited by Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany: New Netherland Publishing, 1991), pp. 147-155.

---, Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Graymont, Barbara, The Iroquois in the American Revolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972).

Green, Ernest, "Gilbert Tice, U.E.," Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society, 21(1924):186-197.

Green, Gretchen, "Molly Brant, Catharine Brant, and their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation," Ontario History 81 (1989): 235-250.

Gullikson, Gay L., Spinners and Weavers of Auffay: Rural Industry and the Rural Industry and the Sexual Division of Labor in a French Village, 1750-1850 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

E. P. H., "Unrest at Caughnawaga or The Lady Fur Traders of Sault St. Louis," Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, 11(1963): 155-160.

Hacker, Barton C., "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 6(1981): 643-671.

Hagedorn, Nancy L., "'A Friend to Go Between Them': The Interpreter as Cultural Broker during Anglo-Iroquois Councils, 1740-1770," Ethnohistory 35(1988): 60-80.

---- "'Faithful, Knowing, and Prudent': Andrew Montour as Interpreter and Cultural Broker, 1740-1772," in Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), pp. 44-60.

Hamil, Fred C., "Sally Ainse, Fur Trader," Historical Bulletin No. 3, 1939, Issued by the Algonquin Club, Detroit.

Hamilton, Milton W., Sir William Johnson: Colonial American, 1715-1763 (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1976).

---- "Sir William Johnson's Wives," New York History 38(1957): 18-28.

Hanna, Charles A., The Wilderness Trail or The Ventures and Adventures of the Pennsylvania Traders on the Allegheny Path (New York: AMS Press, 1971 [reprinted from 1911 edition]).

Hodges, Graham Russell, Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865 (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997).



Hood, Adrienne D., "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," WMO 3rd. Ser. 53(1996): 43-66.

Houde, Cornelia H. Frisbee, "Not Just Another Pretty Dress," in Nancy Anne McClure Zeller, ed., A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers (Albany: New Netherland Publishing, 1991), pp 103-110.

Isaac, Rhys, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).

Jacobsen, Edna C., "Eighteenth-Century Merchants of Colonial Albany," Dutch Settlers Society of Albany Yearbook, 20(1944-45): 5-15.

Jennings, Francis X., Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988).

Jensen, Joan, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

Jones, Jacqueline, "Race, Sex, and Self-Evident Truths: The Status of Slave Women during the Era of the American Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., Women in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989), pp. 293-337.

Jordan, Jean P., "Women Merchants in Colonial New York," New York History 58(1977): 412-438.

Jordan, William Chester, Women and Credit in Pre-Industrial and Developing Societies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

Kammen, Michael, Colonial New York: A History ( New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).

Kelsay, Isabel Thompson, Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984).

Kenney, Alice P., Stubborn for Liberty: The Dutch in New York (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1975).

Kerber, Linda K., Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980).

Kim, Sung Bok, Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York Manorial Society, 1664-1775 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

Kopperman, Paul E., "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America, 1755-1783," Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, 60(1982): 14-34.

Lebsock, Suzanne, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984).

Lemire, Beverly, Fashion's Favorite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800 (London: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Lewis, Johanna Miller, Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

---- "Women Artisans in Backcountry North Carolina, 1753-1790," North Carolina Historical Review 68(1991): 214-236.

Love, Wm. DeLoss, Samson Occum and the Christian Indians of New England (Boston, The Pilgrim Press, 1899).

Main, Gloria L., "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," WMO 3rd Ser. 51(1994): 39-66.

Mancke, Elizabeth, "At the Counter of the General Store: Women and the Economy in Eighteenth-Century Horton, Nova Scotia," in Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, edited by Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1995), pp. 167-181.

Mann, Bruce H., Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

Mandell, Daniel R., Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

Marshall, Sherrin, The Dutch Gentry, 1500-1650: Family, Faith, and Fortune (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

Martin, Ann Smärt, "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," Winterthur Portfolio 28(1993): 141-158.

Martin, Margaret E., "Merchants and Trade of the Connecticut River Valley, 1750-1820," Smith College Studies in History, vol. 24 (1938/1939).

Mayer, Holly A., Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

McCusker, John J., and Russell R. Menard, The Economy of British America, 1607-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

McKendrick, Neil, "Home Demand and Economic Growth: A New View of the Role of Women in the Industrial Revolution," in Historical Studies in English Thought and Society, Neil McKendrick, ed. (New York: 1974), pp. 152-210.

McKendrick, Neil, "The Commercialization of Fashion," in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 34-99.

Merrell, James H., "'The Cast of His Countenance': Reading Andrew Montour" in Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp.13-39.

Merrill, Michael, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," Radical History Review 4(1977): 42-71.

Merwick, Donna, Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: The Dutch and English Experience (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Montgomery, Florence M., Textiles in America, 1650-1870 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984).

Morgan, Philip D., "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans," in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan Eds., Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 157-219.

---- "The Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Low Country," Journal of Southern History, 49(1983): 399-420.

Mui, Hoh-cheung and Lorna H. Mui, Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

Mullin, Michael, Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld, "Autonomy and the Economic Roles of Indian Women of the Fox-Wisconsin Riverway Region, 1763-1832," in Nancy Shoemaker, ed., Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), pp. 72-89.

Namias, June, White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Narrett, David E., Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York City (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Nash, Gary B., The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Norton, Mary Beth, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

---- Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

---- "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," American Historical Review (89) 1984: 593-619.

---- "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," WMO 3rd Ser. 33(1976): 386-409.

Norton, Thomas Eliot, The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

Nylander, Jane C., "Clothing for the Little Stranger, 1740-1850," in Peter Benes, ed., Families and Children: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1985 (Boston: Boston University, 1987), pp. 64-77.

Pearson, Jonathan, Contributions for the Genealogies of the First Settlers of the Ancient County of Albany from 1630-1800 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978[reprint of 1872 edition]).

---- Contributions for the Genealogies of the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Patent and City of Schenectady from 1662-1800 (Albany, New York; J. Munsell, 1873).

---- A History of the Schenectady Patent in the Dutch and English Times (Albany, New York: Joel Munsell, 1883, reprinted by the Schenectady Historical Society, 1982).

Perdue, Theda, "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood" in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 35-51.

Perkins, Edwin J., "Conflicting Views on Fiat Currency: Britain and its North American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," Business History 33(1991): 8-30.

Perkins, Elizabeth A., "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," JAH 54(1991): 486-510.

Pierson, William D., Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

Plummer, Wilbur C., "Consumer Credit in Colonial Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 66(1942): 385-409.

Randle, Martha Champion, "Iroquois Women, Then and Now," in William Guy Spittal, ed., Iroquois Women: An Anthology (Oshwehen, ONT: Irocrafts, Ltd., 1990), pp. 136-148.

Ray, Arthur J., "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 255-270.

Richter, Daniel K., "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," WMO 3rd Ser. 40(1983): 528-559.

---- "Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations, 1664-1701," JAH 75(1988):40-67.

Rosen, Deborah A., Courts and Commerce: Gender, Law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1997).

Rothenberg, Winifred Barr, From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

Salmon, Marylynn, Women and the Law of Property in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

Samford, Patricia A., "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 87-114.

Schama, Simon, The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

Schmidt, Leigh Eric, "'A Church-going People are a Dress-Loving People': Clothes, Communication, and Religious Culture in Early America," Church History 58(1989): 36-51.

Schlotterbeck, John T., "The Internal Economy of Slavery in Rural Piedmont Virginia," in Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan eds., The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1991)pp. 170-181.

Shammas, Carole, The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Shannon, Timothy J., "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson and the Indian Fashion," WMO 3rd Ser. 53(1996): 13-42.

Shoemaker, Nancy, "Kateri Tekakwitha's Tortuous Path to Sainthood," in Nancy Shoemaker, ed., Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), pp. 49-71.

Soderlund, Jean R., "Black Women in Colonial Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 107(1983): 49-68.

Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

Szasz, Margaret Connell, "Samson Occum: Mohegan as Spiritual Intermediary," in Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), pp. 61-78.

Tebbenhoff, Edward H., "Tacit Rules and Hidden Family Structures: Naming Practices and Godparentage in Schenectady, New York, 1680-1800," Journal of Social History 18(1985): 567-585.

Thomas, Peter A., "Cultural Change on the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665," in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contact on Native American Cultural Institutions A.D. 1000-1800 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), pp. 131-161.

Thorp, Daniel B., "Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina," WMO 3rd Ser. 48(1991): 387-408.

Tooker, Elizabeth, "Women in Iroquois Society," in William Guy Spittal, ed., Iroquois Women: An Anthology (Oshwehen, ONT: Irocrafts, Ltd., 1990), pp. 199-216.

Trustram, Myna, Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Tryon, Rolla Milton, Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860 (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1966 [reprinted from 1917 edition]).

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

---- A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary, 1785-1812 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

---- "Martha Ballard and her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine" in Work and Labor in Early America, Stephen Innes, ed., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp 70-105.

---- "'Daughters of Liberty': Religious Women in Revolutionary New England," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., Women in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989), pp. 211-243.

---- "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth-Century New England," WMO 3rd Ser. 55(1998): 1-38.

Usner, Daniel H., Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992)

Vickers, Daniel, Farmers and Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

Van Deursen, A.T., Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland, trans. by Maarten Ultee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Van Rensselaer, May King (Mrs. John), The Goede Vrouw of Man-a-hat-a: At Home and in Society, 1609-1760 (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [c1898]).

Volk, Joyce Geary, "The Dutch Kast and the American Kas: A Structural Historical Analysis," in New World Dutch Studies: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America 1609-1776, ed. by Roderic H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelley, (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1987), pp. 107-117.

Wallace, Anthony F.C., The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

Walsh, Lorena S., "The Experience and Status of Women in the Chesapeake, 1750-1775," in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr. and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., The Web of Southern Relations: Women, Family, and Education (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1985), pp. 1-18.



Ward, Barbara Maclean, "Women's Property and Family Continuity in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut," in Peter Benes, ed., The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1987, Early American Probate Inventories (Boston: Boston University, 1989), pp. 74-85.

Weatherill, Lorna, "A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660-1740," Journal of British Studies 25(1986):131-156.

Wells, Robert V., The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

White, Deborah Gray, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985),

White, Richard, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

White, Shane, Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

---- "'It Was a Proud Day': African-Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834," JAH 81(1994):13-50.

Williams-Myers, A.J., "Hands That Picked No Cotton: An Exploratory Examination of African Slave Labor in the Colonial Economy of the Hudson River Valley to 1800," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History, 11(1987): 25-51.

---- "Pinkster Carnival: Africanisms in the Hudson River Valley," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History 9(1985): 7-17.

Wood, Betty, Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

## Unpublished Papers and Doctoral Dissertations

Bielinski, Stefan, "Women Alone: Widows, Abandoned Wives, and Single Women in Wartime Albany, 1775-1783," unpublished paper presented at the Conference on New York History, New Paltz, NY, 1996.

----"Scottish-Dutch Intermarriage: Albany Merchants and the Brides of New Netherlands," unpublished ms. on file at CAP.

Cleary, Patricia A., "'She merchants' of Colonial America: Women and Commerce on the Eve of the Revolution," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1989).

Green, Gretchen Lynn, "A New People in an Age of War: The Kahnawake Iroquois, 1667-1760," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1991).

Martin, Ann Smart, "Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade from London to the Virginia Frontier," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1993).

McLaughlin, William John "Dutch Rural New York: Community, Economy, and Family in Colonial Flatbush," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981).

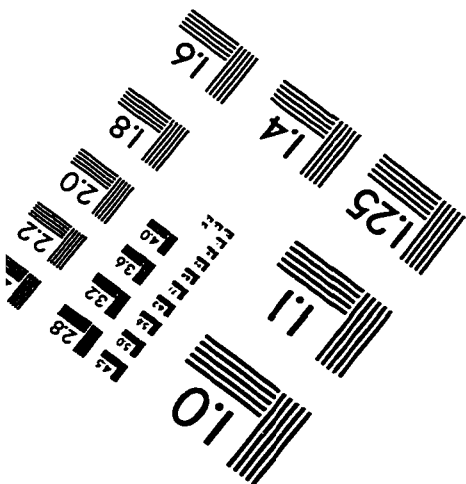
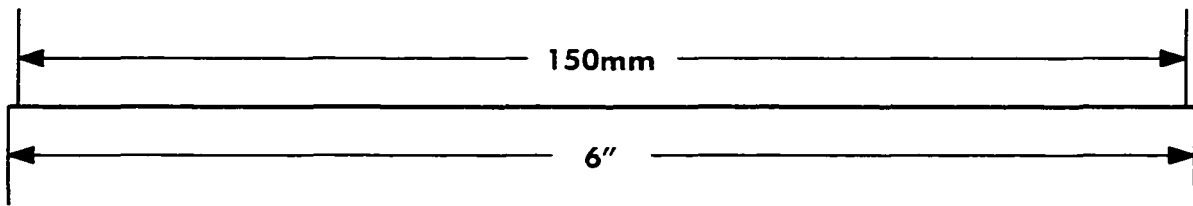
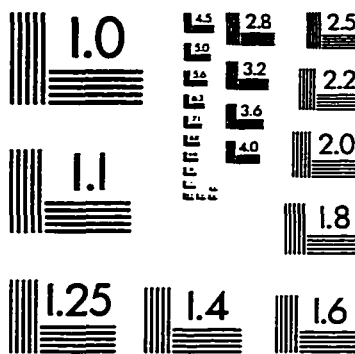
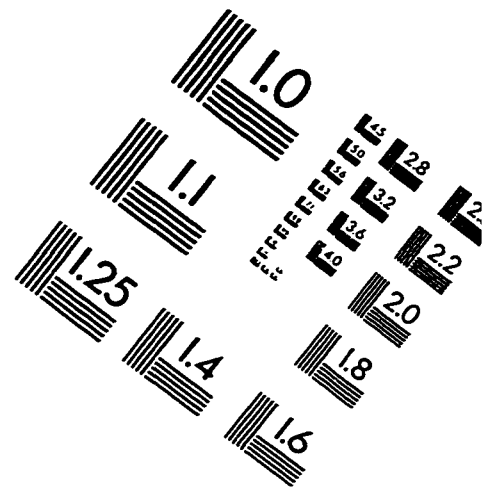
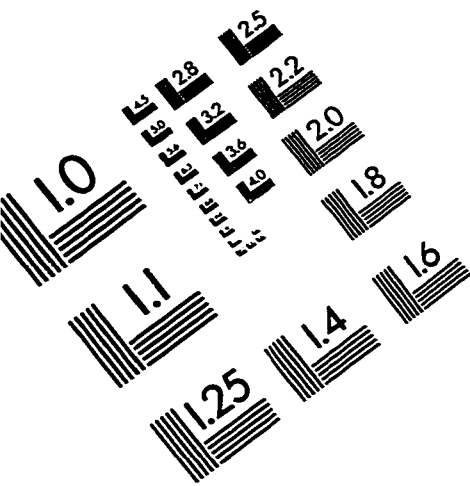
Pena, Elizabeth Shapiro, "Wampum Production in New Netherlands and Colonial New York: The Historical and Archaeological Context," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1990).

Shattuck, Martha Dickinson, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwijck, New Netherland, 1652-1664," (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1993).

Wares, Lydia Jean, "Dress of the African-American Woman in Slavery and Freedom: 1500-1935," (unpub. PhD. dissertation, Purdue University, 1981).

Wonderly, Anthony, "Montaukets Among the Brothertons in the Land of the Oneida, 1784-1830," Unpublished paper presented at the 1997 Conference on New York History, Saratoga Springs, NY.

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

